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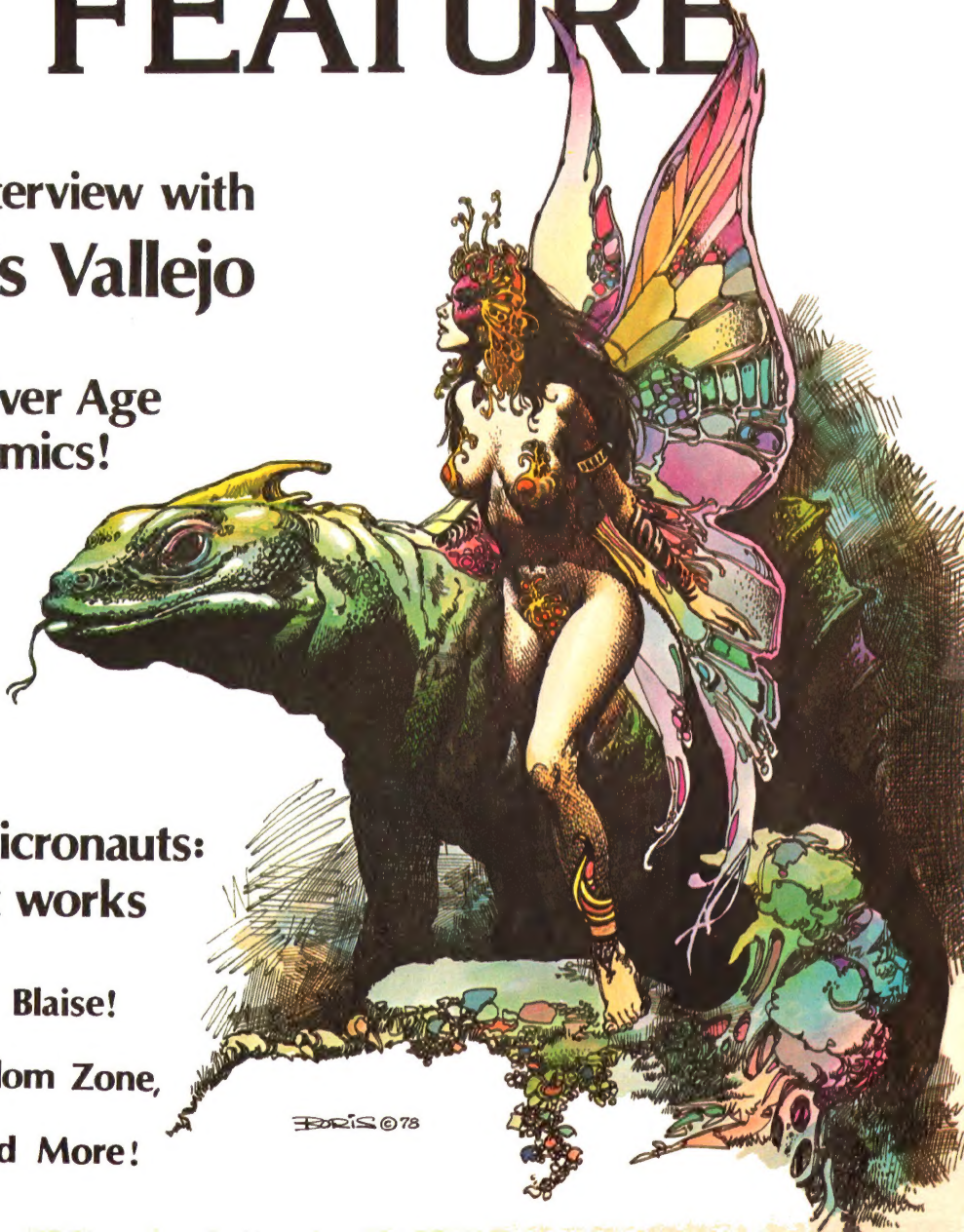
An interview with
Boris Vallejo

The Silver Age
of Comics!



The Micronauts:
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Modesty Blaise!

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Volume 1 No. 3 **Contents** June 1980

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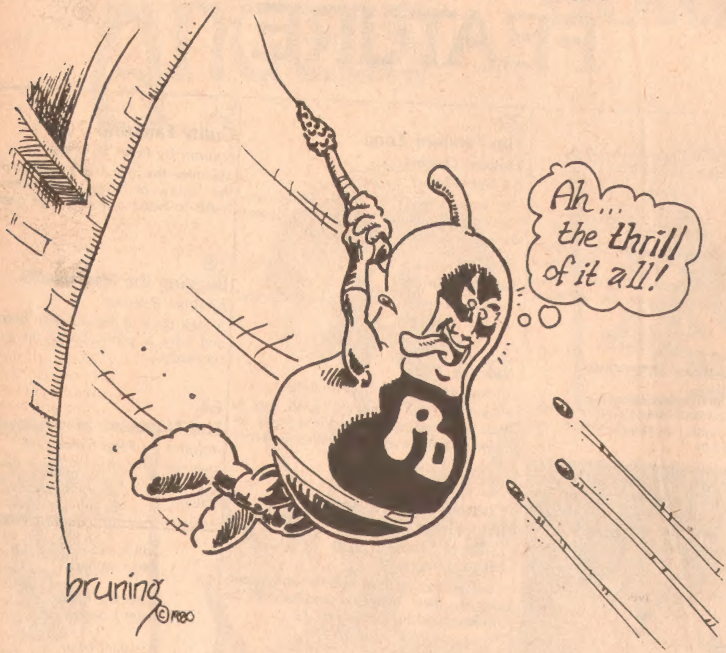

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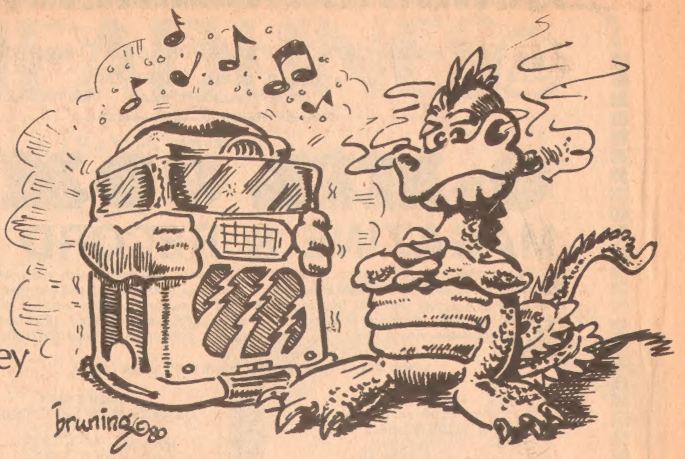
Opening Notes

Editorial by Dean Mullaney



Summertime is close at hand and with the warm weather comes the barrage of major comics conventions across the country. While the "Big Three" remain the New York Comic Art Convention the beginning of July, the Chicago Con in the middle of July, followed by the San Diego Con at the end of July, each year brings more conventions to more cities. This year is certainly no exception and fans from Boston to Houston to Seattle to Cleveland, to name a few, will get together for a couple of days, and it's a great way to meet people.

The first comics convention I attended was the New York Comic Art Convention in July 1970. I don't even recall how I heard about the con, not having been reading fanzines at the time, but I heard of it somehow and the thought of meeting other comics fans in the area was exciting. While I had been reading comics since 1958, and actively collecting them since 1964, I had no contact with other fans. All my neighborhood friends stopped reading comics around the age "normal" kids did, and I saw the con as a great opportunity to meet others with whom I could talk comics. And so I dragged my girlfriend on the Staten Island Ferry and headed into midtown Manhattan and the con.

The ride up the elevator to the 18th floor of the Statler Hilton was uneventful, although it was exciting to see other people walking around with comic books in full public view. The elevator doors opened, and it was intimidating, to say the least. Here was this rowdy collection of people impatiently waiting on line to get past the admission table.

Of course I didn't know anyone there, but I knew it would be only a matter of minutes before I'd strike up conversations with half the people in sight. But throughout the day, I didn't find any of those conversations. Lesson number one: don't take your girlfriend (or boyfriend) along to a convention if they're not interested in comics. Not only do they keep bugging you to leave, but half your time is spent trying to make sure they're not bored stiff . . . which is the natural reaction if you're thrown into a group of people running around and screaming about something you have no interest in whatsoever.

The next year's con turned out much better in terms of meeting people. (At the time, the only comics con in New York was the big July Con, with the Creation people just getting ready for their first Thanksgiving con.) This time I went by myself. And without the "crutch" of having someone to talk to at all times, I met people. Sitting down waiting for a panel to begin, I eavesdropped on two other fans talking about whatever the hottest book of the day was. After listening to their conversation for a few minutes, I took a deep breath and piped in with my two cents. For a split second their eyes just stared, but the ice was broken and we pretty much hung out together for the rest of the day.

Obviously there were other highlights to the con, such as meeting Frank Frazetta and getting a sketch from Neal Adams, but they didn't seem as important as making the friends with whom I could discuss comics.

And so it went. The New York cons had their regulars and while we only saw each other once or twice a year, in that particular context, we had something in common.

As I learned about organized fandom and began contributing to fanzines, I "met" more and more comics readers, most of whom I never did meet personally. Places like Kansas City and New Orleans were not on my beaten path travelling from borough to borough in New York City.

Conventions continued to be the only place for personal contact, and once the New York cons started attracting fans from all over the country, places like West Virginia and Wisconsin seemed a little closer. And through the years I've gained a good number of friends from chance meetings at New York cons. Some of them crossed the barrier separating comics friends and *real* friends. People like Mark Gasper, Peter Gillis, Meloney Crawford, Frank Lovece, Bob Rodi, Rich Bruning, Ed Via and Peter Sanderson. And there are people like Don McGregor and Steve Gerber who I first met in the "fan/pro" situation and who became the special friends they are today. And there's the chance meeting at a con that formed a very special bond, one that made future roommates and even started a magazine: Mark Gruenwald, a statistician even then, who noted the date we first met, on which we try to plan a minor party every year.

Meeting people is an ongoing phenomenon. Although I find cons less personal than they used to be, with the accent on hustling and not having a good time, I still meet people. All you have to do is reach out.

So consult our con listings in the Fandom Zone and at the upcoming convention in your area, get out there and make some friends. I hope you'll be as lucky as I've been. ■

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HEADLINES

ROY THOMAS LEAVES MARVEL FOR DC

Roy Thomas, Marvel's senior writer and former editor-in-chief, will be going to write comics exclusively for DC upon the expiration of his Marvel contract on August 31 of this year. His first DC stories should appear "in early 1981." In keeping with DC's policy on the matter, Thomas will not be editing his own stories at the company.

It has not yet been officially announced which series Thomas will be writing for DC. However, it is rumored, but not confirmed by DC, that he will be doing the adventures of the Justice Society, the original Captain Marvel, and a new barbarian character.

Thomas's final issue of the monthly four-color *Conan the Barbarian* comic will be, appropriately enough, the tenth anniversay issue, number 115. It will be a double-sized issue guest-starring Red Sonja in a story in which Conan defeats her in battle.

Thomas will be writing *King Conan* through issue 8, and will be editor of *The Savage Sword of Conan* through issue 59. The issues through 59 will use up all the rest of the Thomas-Buscema collaborations done for *Savage Sword*. The rest of the inventory of Thomas stories for the magazine will be published on a schedule to be determined by the magazine's new editor, Louise Jones. These are a story pencilled by Ernie Chan, one pencilled by Mike Vosburg and inked by Alfredo Alcala, and a tale drawn by Ernie Colon and inked by Alcala.

Jones will also take over the editing of the four-color *Conan* comic and *King Conan*. John Buscema will continue as principal Conan artist, and J. Marc deMatteis will script the regular *Conan* comic. Jones intends to allow a variety of writers to work on the Conan stories in *Savage Sword* at first, and "eventually settle on whoever writes the best" as regular writer for the book. As for the *Conan* newspaper strip, it will be written by Doug Moench and pencilled by Rudy Nebres.

Roy Thomas has been associated with Marvel Comics for a decade and a half. For ten of those years he was the sole writer for Marvel's Conan the Barbarian stories, which have appeared in three separate regular comics (*Conan the Barbarian, Giant-Sized Conan, and King Conan*), two black-and-white magazines (*Savage Tales* and *The Savage Sword of Conan*), color Super Specials, a syndicated comic strip and even an issue of *What If* set in the 1970s. In total, this amounts to over 5000 pages of Conan scripting. Thomas was instumental in Marvel's obtaining the rights to Conan and other Robert E. Howard characters, and has by now adapted all of Howard's original Conan stories into comics form.

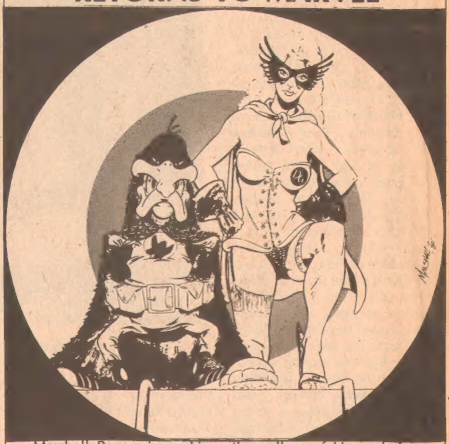
Thomas was Marvel's first editor-in-chief after Stan Lee became publisher, and during his administration presided over the doubling of the number of comics being published by Marvel. Thomas also brought many of the writers now most associated with Marvel Comics into the company.

Besides his work on *Conan*, Thomas also scripted nearly seventy issues of *The Avengers* (including the classic Kree-Skrull War epic), *The X-Men, Sub-Mariner, Dr. Strange, The Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Kull, The Fantastic Four, Tarzan, Red Sonja, The Invaders, Star Wars,* and most recently, *Thor* over the course of his long Marvel career. Thomas persuaded Marvel to procure the comic book rights to *Star Wars* long before the movie opened and before anyone imagined what a financial success it would prove to be. He created the series *The Invaders, Warlock, Werewolf by Night, Iron Fist, Man-Thing, The Defenders* and *What If* as well as Red Sonja (based loosely on a woman named Sonya in a non-Conan Howard story), Morbius, the Banshee, and the present day versions of the Vision and the Black Knight.

Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter states that he wanted Thomas to sign a new contract

continued on page **9**

MARSHALL ROGERS RETURNS TO MARVEL



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Marshall Rogers is working on two stories for Marvel's black and white magazines. He is both pencilling and inking a twenty-page story by Bill Mantlo for *Howard the Duck* 8 entitled "Duckman." The plot has Howard and Beverly, in Miami, becoming involved with a man who forces the Duck to wear a superhero costume to promote his product. Howard's adventures as Duckman, who is also described as "the Ducknight Detective," will be drawn by Rogers in a different style from the rest of the story, one parodying his own acclaimed work on a similar character for another company. Rogers is also contributing a portrait of Howard (with Beverly) as "The Dark Mallard of the Night" to the gallery of Howard drawings by top comics artists scheduled for an upcoming issue. *Howard* 8 will also run "The Grey Panther," a twenty-page story by Mantlo and Gene Colan involving Howard with a Miami old age home.

Rogers is also doing full pencils for a *Daughters of the Dragon* adventure (Misty Knight and Colleen Wing from *Power Man* and *Iron Fist*) being scripted by Denny O'Neil for *Marvel Preview* 24, which will take women adventurers for its theme. This issue will also feature a *Black Widow* story by Ralph Macchio and Paul Gulacy, and a tale plotted and probably pencilled by Michael Golden, involving a pair of sorceresses and the Hindenburg disaster.

Headlines

COMICS- RELATED FILMS

The next *Star Wars* film to be made after *The Empire Strikes Back* will be *Return of the Jedi*, in which Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader have their final battle and, apparently, the Empire is overthrown.

The Empire Strikes Back is in fact "Episode V" (as stated in the film's opening titles) of a projected nine-part cycle of films comprising three trilogies. According to the outline *Star Wars* creator and executive producer George Lucas gave *Time* for its May 19, 1980 cover story, the first trilogy will show the decline of the Old Republic through the indifference of its citizenry towards electing good government officials, and the takeover of the evil being who proclaims himself Emperor. *Time* describes the Emperor, who appears briefly in *The Empire Strikes Back*, as "a bad counterpart to Yoda," the teacher of Ben Kenobi and Luke in the ways of the Force. The Emperor, who is apparently a master of the Dark Side of the Force, assisted by Darth Vader, traps and kills most of the Jedi Knights. Ben Kenobi escapes, and in battle with Vader, wreaks the injuries that force the latter to wear his mask and life-support system (hence the heavy breathing sounds Vader makes). Luke Skywalker first appears in the series as a child in Episode III.

Episode IV is the first *Star Wars* film itself, and Episode VI, *Return of the Jedi*, will conclude the middle trilogy of films, which centers on Luke.

The final trilogy concerns itself with the rebuilding of the Republic, and a Lucasfilm spokesman stated at last Thanksgiving's Creation Convention in New York City that there were three more projected films as well, which however contain separate stories and do not form another trilogy. According to Lucas, the only characters who will appear in all nine films of the three trilogies are the two droids, C-3PO and R2-D2.

DC publisher Jenette Kahn and President Sol Harrison flew to London in early May to see a rough cut of *Superman II*

Paramount/Walt Disney

and report they found it "wonderful." The film will be released in the United States in the summer of 1981 and in Europe some time before that. Meanwhile, *Superman I* has become the third top grossing motion picture of all time, surpassed only by *Star Wars* and *Jaws*.

A new *Peanuts* animated film, *Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown*, in which the characters visit France, opened in late May. *Peanuts* creator Charles M. Schulz wrote the script and Bill Melendez directed.

Casablanca Filmworks has now become involved in the production of the upcoming *Batman* movie. Former DC staffer Michael Uslan is still producer and W.D. Richter, who did the screenplays for the 1979 films of *Dracula* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, will be one of the writers. Comics fans may find it ominous that Casablanca executive Peter Guber told New York's *Village Voice* (1/28/80) that the movie "will be nothing like the comic strip," and reassuring that he added it would also be nothing like "the television show."

Filming began on the new live action *Popeye* movie on January 21 in Malta and was scheduled to be completed in late May. It will be a musical with about a dozen songs by Harry Nilsson, directed by Robert Altman (of *M*A*S*H, Nashville*, and many other films) and written by cartoonist Jules Feiffer based on *Popeye* creator E.C. Segar's 1936 comic strip sequence in which Popeye searches for his long lost father Poopdeck Pappy. (This sequence has been reprinted in Nostalgia Press's *Popeye the Sailor* volume.) According to *Newsweek* (3/3/80) Feiffer describes the screenplay as a "gritty romance." The film is being co-produced by Robert Evans Productions (Evans has produced such films as *Love Story* and *Marathon Man*) and Walt Disney Productions: this is one of the first two co-productions Disney has ever done. The cast includes Robin Williams (with, as *Newsweek* showed, his hair cut very short and dyed red) as Popeye, Shelly Duvall as Olive Oyl, and Paul Dooley (*Breaking Away*) as J. Wellington Wimpy, Paul L. Smith (*Midnight Express*) as Bluto, Ray Walston (*Damn Yankees, My Favorite Martian*) as Poopdeck Pappy, one-year-old Wesley Ivan Hurt as Swee'pea, Roberta Maxwell, MacIntyre Dixon and Donald Moffat. Even such less familiar Segar characters as Wimpy's nemesis George W. Geezil and restaurant owner Roughhouse will turn up in the movie, which will be released in the United States by Paramount.

A stop-action animated *Pogo* film is being directed by Marc Chinoy for Stowmar Enterprises in a studio in northern Virginia near Washington D.C.. The animation process being used for the three-dimensional clay figures took thirteen years to develop. Chinoy told *The New York Times* (11/25/79) "We are trying to create the same movement you've come to expect in full (hand-drawn) animation." Each frame of the film is being shot individually, with twenty-four frames making up one second of screen time, and the figure being animated molded in a slightly different way for each frame. Among the people providing the characters' voices are Vincent Price (Deacon Mushrat), Stan Freeberg (Albert the Alligator), columnist Jimmy Breslin (P.T. Bridgeport), Jonathan Winters, Ruth Buzzi and Arnold Stang.

Other comics-oriented projects in preparation include a forthcoming Broadway musical based on *Blondie*, co-authored by Dean Young, the son of *Blondie* creator the late Chic Young, who writes the the strip; the film version of the Broadway musical *Annie*; and a *Flash Gordon* movie produced by Dino di Laurentis.

continued on page 9

Headlines

MARVEL FEATURE PAGES

The fate of the "Secrets of Marvel Superheroes" feature pages mentioned in our last issue appears to be up in the air. Some are already in preparation and will see print sometime; others may not be done after all. Here are descriptions of some that will be appearing.

The "Secrets" page for *Master of Kung Fu* are by Doug Moench and Mike Zeck and include a double-page spread picturing all of Shang-Chi's friends and allies through the history of the series, and another portraying all of his adversaries; maps of Fu Manchu's fortress in Honan, China, Sir Denis Nayland Smith's castle Stormhaven, and Leiko's and Reston's flats; a page illustrating some of Shang-Chi's battle techniques; and a page of "Meditations" in which Shang-Chi offers the reader various words of wisdom.

Marvel Two-in-One will offer five pages of "Project Pegasus Security Files" on the Thing, Quasar, Thundra, the new Giant-Man, and Aquarian, with portraits of the characters by Terry Austin.

Roger Stern's and John Byrne's "Secrets" feature for *Captain America* will reveal Bucky's full name for the first time, provide a map of New York City giving the location of such sites as Avengers Mansion and Steve Rogers' apartment building, briefly review Cap's past life, and provide pictures of his various friends and allies of both past and present. There will also be a section telling the reader everything he ever wanted to know about Cap's shield—except what it's made of. Stern reports that fan mail to the book has been overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the origin of the shield a mystery.

Stern and Marie Severin, the regular team on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, will provide a revised "correct" map of Peter Parker's apartment and another of the Empire State University biochemistry teaching assistants' cubicles, and a short piece introducing the E.S.U. supporting cast. Much of the feature will be devoted to "Aunt May's Photo Album," which will chronicle the Parker family's private lives beginning with a "photo" of Aunt May as a flapper in the 1920s, going through pictures of Peter Parker in his infancy, his high school and his college days, and ending with portraits of Peter and company in the present. Stern has also prepared a considerable number of feature pages continuing the "Gallery of Spider-Man Villains" that began in the early annuals. These will appear from time to time in the various current Spider-Man titles.

—P.S.

NEW MARVEL MAGAZINE PROJECTS

Marvel is currently working on a new project called *Marvel Universe*, described as a "showcase of the best possible talent available" working on adventures of the principal Marvel superheroes. Three separate formats for the project are under consideration. One would be a full process color 96-page magazine with slick paper, similar to *Epic*. Another possibility is for a 64-page magazine of the same size as a regular comic book, but with slick paper, and the third is simply an ordinary 64-page comic book. Among the characters mentioned as showing up in the book are the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the Hulk, Thor, Iron Man, Dr. Strange and possibly the Silver Surfer. There will probably be no continuing feature in the magazine.

Roy Thomas's and Craig Russell's *Elric* book which was to be published by the now defunct Baronet Books, will be done by Marvel as a perfect-bound 8½ x 11 book with slick paper and full-process color. (Russell is doing the coloring himself.) Preparation and publication of the book will not be affected by Thomas's forthcoming departure from Marvel. Mike Friedrich, Marvel's Specialty Sales Manager and Star*Reach publisher, is editor of the adaptation.

Another project Marvel will produce specifically for the fan market is a sequel by Jim Starlin to his *Metamorphosis Odyssey*, which is currently being serialized in *Epic*.

There is a possibility that Marvel may again revive *Dracula*, this time as a full-color magazine.

Marvel Preview 23 will be an all-new *Bizarre Adventures* issue, containing a number of stories each averaging around eight pages in length dealing in fantasy, mystery, human interest and the supernatural. The contents include "Annie Mae," Denny O'Neil's adaptation of his own experimental prose short story with art by Gene Colan and a framing sequence done as a fumetti (photographs arranged in sequence to tell a story). Other stories are "Shandra," by Lynn Graeme and John Buscema, with inking by Joe Jusco, "Final Warning," by Graeme and Frank Miller, "The Way of Heaven," by Mike W. Barr and Colan, "Fantasy Gambit," by Roger Stern and Jim Sherman, and "The Whole Tooth," by Steve Skeates and Ned Sonntag.

Upcoming in *Preview* may be a full-length science fiction story, "Paradox," by Bill Mantlo, set on the moon in the future. This is intended as a one-shot story.

Issue 23 of *The Hulk* magazine will have a cover by Walt Simonson.

A new character created by Michael Golden, to appear in Marvel Preview 24. Golden will write, as well as illustrate the story.

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Headlines

DAREDEVIL VS. ANGEL DUST

Daredevil 167 and 168 will feature a two-part story involving the dangers of the infamous drug known colloquially as "angel dust." The story is being done with the advice and cooperation of Phoenix House, the New York City drug information and rehabilitation center, whose help was sought by *Daredevil* co-plotter/writer Roger McKenzie and co-plotter/penciller Frank Miller to ensure that all the information about angel dust presented by the story is absolutely correct. Editor Denny O'Neil, who also played an important role in working on the story, had himself consulted Phoenix House when doing his celebrated "drugs" story for *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* in the early 1970s. McKenzie describes the people at Phoenix House as being "pretty excited" about the story, and plans to credit those who helped him in the issues in which the story runs.

McKenzie and Miller see the story as primarily an adventure tale although the "messages" are there to be seen by the reader. McKenzie believes the story will give a "realistic" portrayal of what drugs do to people and how the drug problem should be dealt with; the drug dealers will not be portrayed as costumed supervillains. Moreover, McKenzie says that the story will take the form of "a morality play" contrasting true "law and order," as represented by Daredevil, who wants to bring the drug dealers to trial, with vigilantism, represented by the Punisher, who wants to kill the dealers. The depiction of the Punisher will be considerably less sympathetic than some in the past: when he first appears in the story, he is knifing a teenager in the back. The focus of the story will be on a boy whose sister has died as a result of angel dust, and who finds himself torn between siding with Daredevil's method of dealing with the guilty parties and the Punisher's. Eventually the conflict builds to a showdown between Daredevil and the Punisher with the boy caught in the middle.

McKenzie terms the story an "experiment" and says he has been told that Marvel is willing to "fight for the story" should its controversial aspects raise problems.

Future *Daredevil* issues will see the eventual return of Bullseye and the creation of some new villains including an "Eisnerian female villain" named Indigo.

Daredevil readers might also be interested to know that a recent newspaper report stated that a *Daredevil* script had been put into Braille for the benefit of a blind student at the Tuffree Junior High School in Placentia, California.

—P.S.

MARVEL PLANS 32-PAGE ADLESS COMIC

Marvel is now planning a new 32-page monthly comic which will contain no ads at all, and hence many more story pages even than the new 50¢ books debuting this summer. This new book, as yet untitled and unscheduled, will sell for 60¢, and feature material designed with the fan market in mind. Popular characters such as the Avengers, the Hulk, Spider-Man and the X-Men will star in new stories preferably by writers and artists who are fan favorites.

Al Milgrom, who conceived the book and will edit it, explained that Marvel does not make that much money on ads; rather, the ads' value lies in the fact that it costs Marvel less to produce pages with advertising on them than it does to produce story pages. Hence, it was decided that advertising would be unnecessary if the book's price was increased and its content made particularly appealing to the direct sales market.

The first issue will star Spider-Man, and the second will feature a story by Chris Claremont and Michael Golden set in the Savage Land and starring Spider-Man, the Angel and Ka-Zar, which was originally scheduled for *Marvel Team-Up*. Issue three will reunite Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum, the original artist for the "new" X-Men, in a sequel to issue 2 which brings the X-Men back to the Savage Land. This story will involve the end of long-time *X-Men* villain Sauron. Milgrom says that he would like to have Paul Gulacy, Mike Nasser and Marshall Rogers work on the book and that he would like to use it to "experiment with something inclined to the fan market" at times.

—P.S.

NEW BOOKS OF INTEREST

Among newly published books involving comics and cartoons are the following:

Mysteries in Space: the Best of DC's Science Fiction Comics, edited by Michael Uslan (Fireside Books paperback, $7.95). This book contains the first Adam Strange story as well as his first team-up with the Justice League against his archfoe Kanjar Ro. Other stories feature J'onn J'onzz the Manhunter from Mars, Captain Comet, Star Hawkins, the Atomic Knights, the Star Rovers, Space Ranger, the Space Museum, Tommy Tomorrow and Space Cabby, and there are also a number of non-series short stories. Among the writers and artists represented in the collection are John Broome, Gardner Fox, Otto Binder, Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino, Mike Sekowsky, Jim Mooney and Frank Frazetta.

Garfield at Large, by Jim Davis (Ballantine Books, ($4.95). This first collection from the *Garfield* comic strip recently took first place on the *New York Times* trade paperback best seller list.

Oliphant! by Pat Oliphant (Andrews and McMeel, Inc. $6.95). This new volume of the author's editorial cartoons covers much of his work during the Carter Administration.

Dancing Cats and Neglected Murderesses by Edward Gorey (Workman Publishing Company, $2.50).

The Other Shoe by Jeff MacNelly (Avon, $5.95). This new collection from the *Shoe* strip has an introduction by Mort Walker of *Beetle Bailey* and other strips.

Money Should be Fun by New Yorker cartoonist William Hamilton, with an introduction by economist and political commentator John Kenneth Galbraith (Houghton Mifflin Company, $5.95). Only 36 of this volume's 189 cartoons have previously been published.

POPEYE
DICK TRACY #2
MEETS the I-PUNKS
POPEYE FACES HIS GREATEST CHALLENGE EVER IN THE RING (SEE BACK COVER)
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Two new collections from Ace/Tempo: Popeye *by Bud Sagendorf; and* Dick Tracy Meets the Punks *by Collins and Fletcher, with a new introduction by Max Allan Collins.*

Thomas

continued from page 5

with Marvel, but that he did not want Thomas to retain his writer-editor status. His reason, Shooter asserts, was simply that it was too difficult to coordinate work on Thomas's books with Thomas directing matters from the West Coast. Thomas would be allowed to do such editorial work as designing covers, but he would not be able to edit his own books. However, Shooter states that he had no intention of interfering with Thomas's actual writing, and points out that Archie Goodwin operates under a similar arrangement to the one Thomas was offered, and is allowed complete freedom in his scripting by a "gentleman's agreement." Thomas, according to Shooter, objected to losing writer-editor status and began talking to DC about work. Finally, Thomas came to New York for a meeting with Shooter, publisher Stan Lee, and Cadence Publishing president James Galton. Shooter reports that Thomas agreed to Marvel's terms at the meeting, and said that he would continue to write the Conan material. However, Thomas said he had already promised to work for DC, although he had not yet delivered a signed contract to that company, and hence felt obligated to ask to be allowed to write one superhero series for DC. Shooter, Lee, and Galton were in agreement that a major Marvel writer like Thomas should not divide his services between the two major companies, and so Thomas decided to do comics exclusively for DC. Shooter explains that he does not mind if writers or artists whom Marvel cannot provide with enough assignments work for both companies, but that he believes that writers and artists closly associated with Marvel should not work for the competition as well. COMICS FEATURE was unalbe to reach Thomas for comment.

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MARVEL SEEKS RIGHTS TO JAMES BOND

Marvel is very close to securing the rights to do comics adventures about James Bond, and has already begun making plans for the book. It will be a monthly four-color comic with original stories, set in the present. Denny O'Neil will edit the book, and Cary Bates, who has done work on Bond for the producers of the Bond films, will write at least the first four issues. A penciller has not yet been chosen, but Frank Springer is being mentioned for the assignment. O'Neil would prefer the book to stay closer in spirit to the original Ian Fleming Bond novel than to the movies, although he says that Bates prefers the latter. O'Neil would also like the Marvel Bond series to be "totally divorced from other Marvel characters."

Film

continued from page 6

Lucasfilm is also co-producing a forthcoming animated feature film entitled *Twice Upon a Time*, directed by John Korty. Korty described the movie to *The New York Times* as a "contemporary myth in which the heroes, like the heroes of classical mythology, are tricked by the villain" into committing a catastrophically wrong act, in this case, the stopping of time. The villain is out to "steal" time, the *Times* reports, although it does not explain what this means. The film will be aimed at all age groups, and not just children. It will be shot using what Korty terms "modular multiplane animation," a variation on the technique used to create the illusion of depth in animated cartoons. "Even in a Disney feature," Korty told the *Times*, "the number of multiplane shots is often limited to five or six because their multiplane is so expensive. Our style allows every shot to be multiplane," *Twice Upon a Time* is scheduled for release in the spring of 1982.

HEAVY METAL NEWS

July's *Heavy Metal* (Vol. 3 #14) has the first installment of a new four-part serial by Bilal entitled "Progress!" (known in France as "Les Vaisseaux de Pierre"); a short piece by Druillet called "Message from the Shadows" ("Les Visages des Hommes"); "Kraoo" by Sokal; "2005" by Dick Matena; "Galactic Geographic" by Kofoed; "Romance" by Caza; the next chapters of "Changes" by Matt Howarth, "Professor Thintwhistle" by Dick Lupoff and Steve Stiles, and "The Alchemist Supreme" by Goddard and Ribera; part one of "Shore Leave" by Moebius and his one-pager "The Mysteries of Eroticism, Part One."

The August issue begins Druillet's serial "Salammbo," and also contains an interview with Moebius, the conclusion of his "Shore Leave," and the continuations of "Changes," "Professor Thintwhistle," "The Alchemist Supreme" and "The Mysteries of Eroticism."

"The Alchemist Supreme" will conclude in the September issue, which features a Druillet interview. The October issue will be a "rock" issue. Berni Wrightson did a story called "Captain Sternn" for the June issue.

CORBEN BIBLIOGRAPHY PLANNED

The official Richard Corben Bibliography, which will include a complete index of the artist's work annotated by Corben himself, is being prepared by George Brahm, who earlier compiled *The Vaughan Bodé Index*.

The book, scheduled for release this summer, is being published by James Van Hise, publisher and editor of the *RBCC*, and will be 9"×12", 120 pages and include 200 reproductions (8 in full color) and a new wraparound cover by Corben. The expected price is between $10.00 and $12.00.

Short Subjects

DC

- Batman's creator Bob Kane will appear at the "Batman's Birthday" celebration at Phil Seuling's Comic Art Convention, which is being held July 4-6 at New York City's Statler Hilton.

- Joe Kubert has done his first comics story in a number of years for *Mystery in Space* 113. Len Wein is the story's writer.

- John Severin has come back to DC where he will do art for the war books. He has already completed a forthcoming short *Sgt. Rock* piece and an *Enemy Ace* story for *Unknown Soldier*.

- The Spectre returns in a three-part *Ghostbreaker* story by Paul Kupperberg for *Ghosts*.

- The next three-part DC mini-series, following *World of Krypton* and the current *Untold Legend of the Batman*, will be *The Secrets of the Legion of Super-Heroes*, to be plotted by E. Nelson Bridwell and scripted by Paul Kupperberg. The series will cover the group's entire history.

- *Time Warp* inventory stories which do not appear in *Mystery in Space* will be printed in *Unexpected* under the *Time Warp* logo.

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- *The Secret Origins of Super-Heroes DC Blue Ribbon Digest DC Special* #5, due out in August, will include a new origin story for Zatara and Zatanna by Gerry Conway, the origin of Deadman ("Who Has Been Lying in My Grave?" by Arnold Drake and Carmine Infantino from *Strange Adventures 205*), the *"Origin of the Justice League"* (by Gardner Fox and Mike Sekowsky from *Justice League of America* 9), the origin of the Demon ("Unleash the One Who Waits" by Jack Kirby from the first issue of *The Demon*), the origin of Hal Jordan's predecessor as Green Lantern, Abin Sur ("Earth's First Green Lantern" by John Broome, Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson, from *Green Lantern* 16), and "The Origin of Wonder Girl" (by Marv Wolfman and Gil Kane from *Teen Titans* 22).

- The Batman will encounter Nemesis, the new character whose series debuts as a backup feature in *Brave and Bold* 166, in issue 170 of that magazine.

- Beginning with the comics on the December schedule, DC's Dollar Books will drop their page count to forty-eight, but with no ads.

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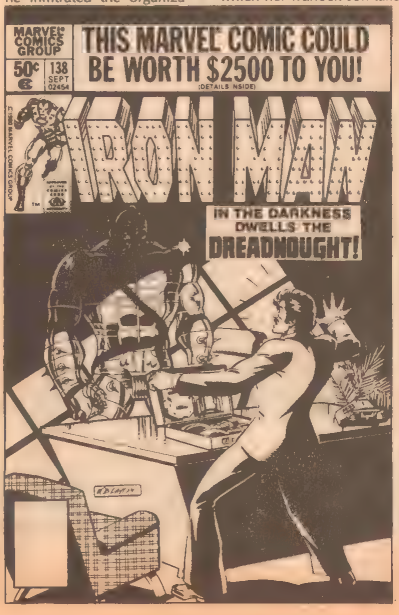
Short Subjects

MARVEL

- The hundredth issue of Marvel Team-Up will contain two stories, one with the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man, and the other pairing Daredevil and Wolverine, both by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller. Jerry Bingham will pencil issue 99 and become the book's regular penciller with issue 101. There will be no regular writer.
- *Moon Knight* #1, going on sale in July, will have a 22-page story in a month when other Marvel books will still be running 17-page stories. The first issue will reveal Moon Knight's true origin, and issue 4, in which he battles the Committee, will resolve the discrepancies between this new origin and the one previously given in *Werewolf by Night*. It will be shown that Moon Knight was not created by the Committee after all, and that he infiltrated the organization under the pretense of being a hireling. In the second issue Moon Knight fights a "Skid Row slasher" and in the third a character called the Midnight Man. Ricardo Villamonte will be the regular inker.
- Doctor Doom regains his sanity and freedom in a back-up story written by Doug Moench and pencilled by Tom Sutton in this year's *Fantastic Four* Annual. Doom will then have a brief meeting with Dormammu in the *Amazing Spider-Man* Annual and will next be seen as one of the main villains, along with the Parasite, in this summer's Superman-Spider-Man team-up book. The feature story in *FF* Annual will be by Moench and George Perez and involves Captain Marvel and the Skrulls.
- Agatha Harkness will soon be written out of *Fantastic Four*: she will return to New Salem after an adventure in which her warlock son takes possession of the mind of Franklin Richards. Alicia moves into the Baxter Building in issue 207. The regular team on the book is now Doug Moench (script), Bill Sienkiewicz (pencils) and Joe Sinnott (inks).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IRON MAN
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- The Western hero Night Rider, who was originally called "Ghost Rider," teams up with the present-day Ghost Rider in issue 50 of the latter's magazine, in a story in which Johnny Blaze travels to the past. Night Rider also appears in a backup story by Michael Fleisher and Carmine Infantino in issue 51.
- *Doctor Who* adventures from Marvel's British books, along with articles about the Doctor's television show, will appear in *Marvel Premiere* 56-59.
- *Avengers* 201-203 will adapt Jim Shooter's *Avengers* prose novella from Pocket Books' *Marvel Superheroes* collection, "This Evil Undying," featuring Ultron. Issue 201 also has a backup story by David Michelinie and George Perez entitled "Bully," starring Jarvis, the Avengers' butler.
- The 1981 Marvel calendar will commemorate the twentieth anniversary of "The Marvel Age of Comics," which began with *Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961. The artwork for each month will feature a different superhero or superhero group. Already in preparation are full page portraits of the X-Men by John Byrne and Terry Austin, Captain America by Byrne and Joe Rubinstein, Daredevil by Frank Miller and Klaus Janson, the Silver Surfer by John and Sal Buscema, the Hulk by Michael Golden (pencils and inks) and Iron Man by Bob Layton (pencils and inks). The cover will be pencilled by Byrne and John Romita, Sr. and inked by Austin.

Short Subjects

- Michael Fleisher leaves *Spider-Woman* with issue 33. J. Marc deMatteis will script number 34. Steven Grant and Gil Kane are collaborating on a one-shot *Shroud* backup story for the book.
- From now on the lead feature in *What If* will star either the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the Hulk or Thor, all top-selling characters, on a rotating basis. An exception will be the issue appearing in November, which will show what would happen if Captain America was elected president, and will be written by Roger Stern. The new *Tales of the Watcher* series in *What If* will deal with untold stories from the history of the Marvel Universe. The first several installments will involve the Inhumans, Eternals and Celestials. Writers for the series include Peter Gillis, Steven Grant and Mark Gruenwald.
- There is a possibility that after the story page hike goes into effect, *Marvel Tales* may begin reprinting *Captain Britain* stories from Marvel's British books from the beginning as a backup feature. The initial *Captain Britain* stories were done several years ago by Chris Claremont and Herb Trimpe.
- Shanna the She-Devil will be a regular supporting character, and one of the hero's romantic interests, in the new *Ka-Zar* comic.
- *Xanadu*, a new film musical from Universal Pictures starring Gene Kelly, Olivia Newton-John and John Beck, is being adapted by Marvel for a Super Special to go on sale in August, the same month as the movie's premiere. Louise Jones is editor, J. Marc deMatteis is writing the adaptation, Alan Weiss drew the first seven pages and Mike Nasser will pencil the rest.

GENERAL

- Norman Mingo, who has done covers for *Mad* since 1956, all featuring the trademark visage of Alfred E. Neuman, died on May 8, 1980 in White Plains, New York at the age of 84.
- *Chapters*, the new magazine reprinting classic comic strips, will add Roy Crane's *Buz Sawyer*, beginning with strips from 1943, to its lineup with the first issue. In the near future *Chapters* will also begin running vintage installments from Dale Messick's *Brenda Starr*.
- The next issue of *The Spirit*, number 24 will feature parts one and three of the 1946 trilogy of stories that culminated with the initial appearance of the Spirit's archenemy, the Octopus. The middle story, "Dulcet Tone," has already been reprinted in the Warren *Spirit* magazine. The first story is entitled "Pool's Toadstool Facial Cream," and the third, in which the Octopus comes on the scene, is "The Postage Stamp," featuring Silk Satin. Associate editor Cat Yronwode's "Department of Loose Ends" column that issue will catalogue all of the Octopus's appearances. Issue 24 also includes a 1941 *Spirit* story about boxing called "Dipsy Dooble," 1947's "Slippery Eall," another installment of *Life on Another Planet*, and the first of the four-page Wally Wood outer space *Spirit* stories, "Rescue."
- The Museum of Cartoon Art in Port Chester, New York is holding a memorial exhibition of the work of Al Capp, creator of *Li'l Abner*, through July.

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The cover of the program book for Starstruck, *a science fiction comedy play with costumes and set design by Mike Kaluta. A small New York production, the play ran for a limited engagement of sixteen performances,*

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AN INTERVIEW WITH
BORIS VALLEJO

FEATURE: Your first work in the fantasy field appeared in comic books, and now you are the premier fantasy paperback cover artist. Did you always aspire to painting as opposed to comic books when you first considered getting into the field?

BORIS: Let me qualify this point. I could not say that I started my career drawing the interiors of comic books. I've been working professionally for about twenty-two years, and in those twenty-two years I have only done two comic book stories — both of those twelve pages. The first was for *Fight The Enemy* and it wasn't so much a matter that I wanted to do comics — I actually never wanted to do comics. I always loved comics but never felt I could do it properly. I just wanted to make some quick money because I wanted to bring my sister to the United States from Peru.

FEATURE: What year was this?

BORIS: This was 1965, a year after I came to this country myself.

FEATURE: Did you come to the U.S. to pursue your career as an artist?

BORIS: Oh, definitely. That was my only purpose in coming here.

FEATURE: What were you doing in Peru?

BORIS: I was a commercial artist. I was doing mostly graphic design, which is . . . rather than being realistic, it's symbolistic. Posters and things like that.

FEATURE: Were you working freelance or for an agency?

BORIS: I was working freelance. I started my career working for a company, but I did most of my work as a freelance artist.

FEATURE: What drew you to the United States?

BORIS: Money. I was one of the top artists in my country but I still wasn't making any money. So logically, I felt that I had to go abroad if I was going to make any kind of living doing artwork. The logical choice, of course, was the U.S., and in the U.S. there wasn't really any place other than New York — that was the best place to go to.

FEATURE: Did you know anyone here?

BORIS: No, I didn't know anybody. I knew of a fellow who used to work with me in Peru who had come here, but I didn't know how he was doing. I tried to get in touch with him before I came here, just to have an idea of what the whole thing was about, but nobody knew where he was. I subsequently found him, but I didn't know where he was when I first arrived.

FEATURE: What did you do when you first arrived?

BORIS: I got a job in a chain of department stores doing newspaper advertising artwork. That's what I did for the first eight years of my staying here. I was doing circulars for newspapers, of shirts and pants, fashion illustration, furniture and all those boring things [Laughter]. Y'know, I was making a living.

FEATURE: What did you have your mind set on at that time?

BORIS: I didn't have my mind set on anything, really. When I first came here my first thought was just that I had to get a job, and that I had to make money somehow. When I left Peru, people had predicted that I was going to be back in fifteen days; a number of people had come here and they couldn't make a living.

The first two and a half years were tough. I actually only started making any kind of money when I left the company where I was working, and started working freelance.

FEATURE: The company that you left, I think, is where you met Doris, your wife.

BORIS: Yes, and that was also the reason why I left the company. There was a company policy that married people couldn't work in the same department and she being an artist was also in the art department. We actually asked [the management] before we got married, not that it would have changed anything, but we wanted to know what to expect. They said, "Oh, you don't have to worry about anything like that." So we got married on a Friday and on Monday they called Doris and said, "There's a company policy and since Boris has been working here longer than you, we're going to have to let *you* go." So I said, "If Doris goes, I go too." And Doris went, and so did I. Everybody thought I was crazy: "What are you going to do? You're newly married?" I had nothing waiting and didn't have any money . . . it was just like when I came [to the U.S.]: I had a great deal of self confidence. I didn't have any doubts that something was going to happen. How I was going to manage, I didn't know, but I figured something was going to have to happen. I'm not saying that something has always happened during my entire life . . .

FEATURE: You drew the story for *Fight the Enemy* #2 during this period?

BORIS: No, that was before I met Doris.

FEATURE: How did you get the assignment?

BORIS: As a matter of fact, this Peruvian guy whom I mentioned before who had come to the U.S. had gotten in touch with a fellow who was sort of an agent. This fellow was a really, really tough cookie. He represented artists — mostly foreign artists, people who didn't know what was going on, what prices were.

FEATURE: He was exploiting the artists?

BORIS: Right, that's exactly what he was doing. This Peruvian guy got in touch with him somehow and recommended me to this agent. At the time, as I said, I wanted to bring my sister to the U.S. I was always close to my sister and she mentioned that she wanted to come here for a vacation. And this opportunity came about to get some money and it was drawing this script of the Green Berets.

FEATURE: They gave you a finished script to work from?

BORIS: Yes. They gave me an idea of what they wanted.

FEATURE: You never did illustrated strips before that?

BORIS: No.

FEATURE: When you approached that job, what influences did you have?

BORIS: Jack Davis. I always loved the EC comics. I read them in Peru, where they were reprinted and translated into Spanish. Jack Davis was my hero.

FEATURE: Did the ECs have an overall effect on your work?

BORIS: Actually, at the time I read the EC comics, I just liked comics, period. I still like comics, but at the time there wasn't any further thought that I was going to use this as any kind of influence in my work, or anything like that, because I wasn't thinking of pursuing an art career at all. I think just about 90% of children like comics. I loved the comics and always liked the horror and so on.

FEATURE: Did you have any other particular favorite artists at EC?

BORIS: Other than Jack Davis . . . of course I like Wally Wood, and so on, but I only found out who Wally Wood was, or Frank Frazetta was, or Al Williamson was . . . when I came here. At the time I didn't really pay much attention to their work. To me Jack Davis was EC; the comics to me were Jack Davis.

FEATURE: How long did you study art in Peru?

BORIS: I studied five years of fine art. I went on a scholarship and as I said, it wasn't in my mind that this was going to be my way of making a living. I went just because I liked it and I had the scholarship.

And I can't say if I've used any of the things I learned there, if I learned anything [laughter]. One thing that I must confess is

that art school gave me a very, very good feeling for figure because from the second year in art school all I did was figure drawing. Drawing the human body was emphasized.

FEATURE: I recall reading that you were once studying to become a doctor?

BORIS: Yes, it was while I was going to art school. I always took art lessons in the evening, and started when I was fourteen years old, and had two years to go to finish high school. Not only was I going to art school, but I was also going to a conservatory of music because I love music and play the violin.

During my last two years of art school . . . you have to realize that the school system in Peru is totally different. We had two periods during the day, from 8:30 to 11:30, and then from 2:00 to 5:00; and also half a day on Saturday, from 8:30 to 11:30. And so my schedule went more or less like this: I would get up and go to school at 8:30, get out at 11:30, take a taxi to the city and the conservatory of music for an hour, and I would come back home around 1:30, have a quick lunch and run to school again at 2:00; get out at 5:00 and run to the city again and be at the art school from 6:00 to 9:00, and then I would come home around 9:30.

FEATURE: And collapse!

BORIS: No. I still had to practice my violin and do my homework for school. And the next day, the same thing. And I was going to a Catholic school so I couldn't even sleep late on Sunday because I had to go to Mass. I kept that kind of pace for about two years, and when I finished high school, I went to college and took two years of pre-med. I saw that that was not for me, so when I was offered a job doing art, that's how the whole thing started.

FEATURE: Were you doing oils at the time?

BORIS: No. I actually only started doing illustration about ten years ago, when I started doing the covers for Warren. Before that it was exclusively drawing, with the exception of the graphic design which I did in watercolor.

FEATURE: Was the painting you did for *Eerie* #34 the first one you did?

BORIS: No. I had done oil painting when I was in art school, but that wasn't illustration. The Warren cover was the first illustration that I did.

FEATURE: How did your working for Warren come about?

BORIS: That actually came about because I had to draw thirteen refrigerators [laughter]. It was an advertising job, and just thinking about refrigerators . . . they were my real boogie-man because you have to show them open and show how much you can put in the refrigerator. So you have to draw all these little boxes of vegetables, how much meat you can put in there, and all these bottles of soda . . . And you have to do them in line rendering. Oh god, it was hideous. I had to do thirteen of those and I was really sick about thinking about having to draw them.

At the time *Eerie* and *Creepy* were very popular and they had the work of Frank Frazetta. I hadn't painted for I don't know how long, but I wanted to do something of that sort, so I went out and bought a few paints and a canvas board and started doing a monster painting. It had this harpy with this warrior . . . but I really had no further thought other than that I wanted to do it.

FEATURE: Sort of see what happens?

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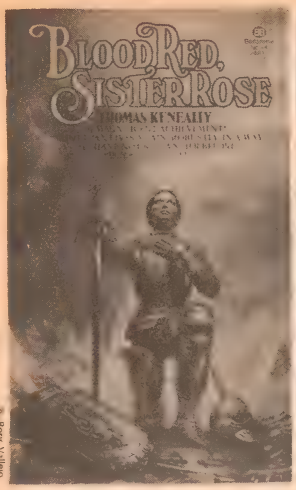

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BORIS: Not even to see what happened. I just wanted to do it because I didn't want to do those refrigerators! My wife, Doris, came home and said, "What the hell are you doing? Are you out of your mind? What is *that*?" I finished it and thought perhaps I could do something with it. Doris was very much against the whole thing. I called up Warren and said I had a painting I wanted to show them and he said, "Bring it by and we'll see what we think of it."

FEATURE: Then you initially did the painting for your own enjoyment, as an escape from the refrigerators. [Laughter]

BORIS: That's it. When I finished it, I kind of liked it. I thought it was competent. I actually didn't think I was going to sell that particular one; I just thought it would be a sample to show what I could do. I took it there and Warren couldn't see me. They told me to leave the painting there and they'd let me know. The next day I got a call from Jim Warren and he was very excited about the painting and wanted to buy it to use for one of his covers. I was delighted! I ran outside where Doris was with the children and told her what happened, and we were really delighted with the whole thing. Warren was going to pay all of $200 for the painting [laughter], but I didn't care. I would have given it to him for nothing, as long as it was going to be published. It was the first thing I had published.

He bought this painting and commissioned another one. I did the second painting . . . it was the one that appeared in *Vampirella* (#9).

FEATURE: It was printed as a small box in the corner . . .

BORIS: It was supposed to be a full cover, but . . .A funny story happened with Warren: I brought a painting in and he gave me a check. About two weeks later I got another check for the same painting. I called up Warren and said, "I think this was a mistake. You already paid for this one." He said. "Oh thank you very much. I really appreciate your calling me; it's very nice of you to be so honest," and so on. And that was the last time I heard from Jim Warren.

He was supposed to give me another cover assignment and so I called him, and called him and called him, and he wouldn't get on the phone. I finally said the hell with it.

I found out years later . . . from my eye doctor, who happened to have a house next to Warren's house in the Hamptons. Somehow in a conversation between them my name came up and Warren said that yes, he used me but there was some funny incident that he took as an omen that things wouldn't go right with me.

FEATURE: He took it as an omen? That's weird.

BORIS: He's a very peculiar guy.

FEATURE: What was it that he took as an omen?

BORIS: The fact that he had made a mistake and might have lost money [laughter]. It was really strange and I couldn't understand. And that was the end of my working for Warren.

In the meantime there was a fellow named Chuck McNaughton, who was working with Warren when he bought this painting . . . a very nice guy and he was doing freelance work for Skywald. He mentioned my name to the people at Skywald and they called me. Since I wasn't doing any more covers for Warren . . . in fact, the covers that I did for Skywald came out in print several months before the ones I did for Warren.

FEATURE: I always thought you worked for Skywald first.

BORIS: No, at Warren they had to write the stories for the covers, because after the first one, the covers weren't done on commission.

FEATURE: You did a number of cover paintings for Skywald.

BORIS: I didn't do that many, about five or six. They liked them very much and in fact, that's how I started doing work for Marvel Comics.

FEATURE: Sol Brodsky?

BORIS: Yes. Sol Brodsky, who was at Skywald, went back to work for Marvel and called me from there.

FEATURE: What was the first work you did for Marvel?

BORIS: Sol Brodsky introduced me to Roy Thomas, who wanted me to do the first cover for a new magazine they were coming out with, *Dracula Lives*. I did that cover, and Roy Thomas bought the painting for that first issue.

FEATURE: For his own collection?

BORIS: Yes, which I understand he subsequently sold. We had

signed — these things happen all the time, of course — a paper that he wasn't supposed to sell it and if he did, I was supposed to get a certain percentage of the sale. I don't know how much he sold it for, but I know that he sold it.

After *Dracula Lives* came *Tales of the Zombie*, for which I did a few covers.

FEATURE: And then *Savage Sword of Conan*.

BORIS: Yes, which is when I felt that I was really getting there. I think they were the first ones I was really pleased with as paintings.

FEATURE: The style of those paintings were very similar to the style established by Frazetta. Was this a conscious decision on your part, or was it a decision made by the editor?

BORIS: Oh, yes. I always admired the work of Frank Frazetta. I've never denied the fact that, especially at the beginning, I was very heavily influenced by his work. I thought he was about the best illustrator of this type of work. One has to learn from one source, and I was trying to learn from him. And so it was my conscious effort to do it that way.

FEATURE: Why did you stop doing covers for Marvel?

BORIS: The reason I stopped was because while at the time I was the highest paid cover artist at Marvel — the only other person who was getting as much money was Neal Adams — I started doing work for paperback books.

FEATURE: This came out of your work at Marvel?

BORIS: Yes. At the time I was still doing the covers for Marvel, it was just on the side. I wasn't doing that exclusively. I was still working for advertising. I was doing perhaps one cover for Marvel every two months. It was fun, but it wasn't really any money-making thing. Then we had the recession of the 1970s and a lot of the advertising companies I was doing work for went bankrupt — companies like Stearns, W.T. Grant. All of a sudden I wondered where I was going to get the next meal. So I decided to put some of the paintings together and go to the book publishers. I went to Ace Books and the art director there gave me the first job. And it was considerably more money than I was getting from Marvel.

But I still felt that I had to continue doing the covers for Marvel because I owed them a certain amount of loyalty. But after a year or so, the money just wasn't enough and I was getting much more from the book publishers. I discussed the whole thing with Roy Thomas and they couldn't pay any more than they were paying, so that was the end of my working for Marvel.

FEATURE: You've been very prolific in the paperback cover field. It seemed as though shortly after you began around 1975, your paintings were on an incredible number of books.

BORIS: The first year of my paperback career I did better than one a week. I did something like fifty-six covers, of which about two-thirds were done for Ballantine Books.

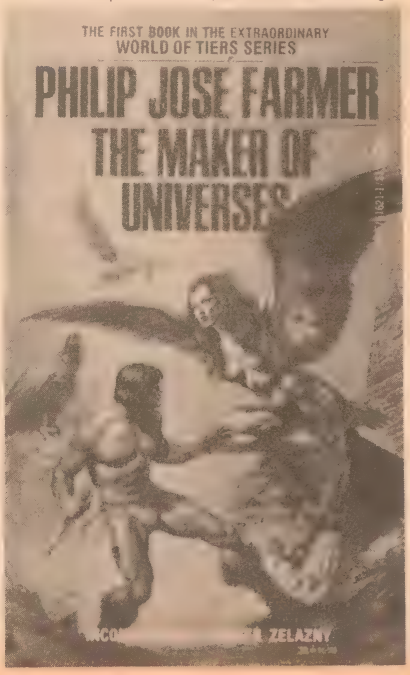
FEATURE: Do you read the books you're commissioned to paint covers for, to get a feel for and description of the characters?

BORIS: I used to read all the manuscripts word by word and then select the scenes that I liked. I can no longer do that because it takes too much time. It's just impossible. I can read very quickly and go through about half the book and then decide what I'm going to do with it, whether I'm going to use something general or a specific scene. I no longer read the whole book unless it's extremely interesting.

Right now I am not doing that many book covers. I have so many other things to do that there is not much time for it. So from doing better than one a week when I first started, I can only do perhaps ten a year or something like that.

FEATURE: Looking at your paintings, it's obvious that you use models. Can you take us through the process of how you go about selecting a model, and continuing it through until the painting is completed?

BORIS: The first stage, of course, is getting the manuscript. The publisher will call me up and I read it until I can find a scene that I find suitable. From there I prepare a sketch, which can be either very finished in color, or very rough in pencil, and I show it to the client. The client will either okay it or suggest certain changes, although that doesn't happen often — most of the time it's just okayed on the spot. I then call my photographer, who works exclusively for illustrators, and schedule a shooting.



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I don't work with too many different models. I have worked with maybe eight or ten . . . up to a certain point when I get people I really like. They know how I work, they have the right look, the right way of posing . . . and I have been working with practically one model for two years or so. We work fine together . . . she's pretty [laughter]. I'm using her exclusively for my book that's coming out next year. Once you know what you want and the model knows what you want, it's so much better than to be changing from one model to another.

FEATURE: I notice that here in your studio, you have a number of watercolors.

BORIS: I do watercolors as preliminary sketches.

FEATURE: You use yourself as your male model in many of your paintings.

BORIS: [Laughter] I prefer using myself. For my type of work it's very difficult to get professional models who have the right feel, because they usually do fashion modelling or perhaps romantic illustrations. And I do. I've also done bodybuilding, which is another thing that helps.

FEATURE: Do you think you have a tendency to overuse your own face? Since you've done so many cover paintings, you always see the same person. For example, the painting you did of Corwyn for the collected Zelazny Amber series. How do you feel about that?

BORIS: How do I feel about that? I haven't heard it myself so I haven't really thought about it. The only reason I can give you is that I haven't heard it myself. But that's really a valid point. I suppose I should give it some consideration.

FEATURE: You did the illustrations for your wife's children's book. Did you enjoy the experience?

BORIS: No. I don't think either she or I enjoyed it. I don't think we're really all that suited for children's books.

FEATURE: Why do you say that?

BORIS: My wife is a writer for one thing, a serious writer, and her style is not that suited to children's books. And I actually did all of the illustrations for the book in a little over a week. I really don't care for that type of work.

FEATURE: How about doing interior illustrations for adult fantasies?

BORIS: I don't particularly care for doing too much of one thing, because I have a tendency to get bored.

FEATURE: Is that why you don't do comics?

BORIS: Yeah . . . well, there are many reasons why I don't do comics. Basically, it's because I don't feel I can do it well. I'd spend too much time on one particular panel. I can't do it that way. There are some people who do it really beautifully and they have the right feeling for it.

FEATURE: You did a portfolio last year, in pen and ink. Do you enjoy working in pen and ink?

BORIS: I enjoyed doing the portfolio, but I must say I still don't feel that comfortable working in just pen and ink. There are certain things I have done in pen and ink that I have been very pleased with, but I don't feel that at this point I have the control that I do with color. I think my forte is really color.

FEATURE: You'd prefer watercoloring your pen and inks? You feel that you're still learning . . .

BORIS: I'm always learning and always developing. My style, I think, has changed quite a lot from the time I started to what it is now. I think it has changed tremendously.

FEATURE: Esteban Moroto has been an influence on your pen and ink work.

BORIS: Very much so. I really love his style, and in ink work — I may be overstating the fact, but I can't think of anybody whose

work I like as much as his.

FEATURE: When you first started painting covers, you said you learned from what people like Frazetta were doing. In 1980, however, your style is the one other artists are emulating. What do you think of other artists copying your style?

BORIS: I don't think of it as people copying my style. I think it's good to copy somebody's style, but I don't think you should try to imitate it to the high degree of trying to make it look exactly like such and such. I think it's good to study different styles to see . . . the best way of learning is by copying what somebody else is doing. I'm not really too aware of what people are imitating whom or what.

FEATURE: In 1978 or so, you were going to a lot of conventions. What are your feelings about conventions and meeting the fans?

BORIS: First of all, they are very time consuming. You can't work, of course, for two or three days. I never charge a fee for conventions; I just go and enjoy it. Of course I want to have my expenses paid, but I am not making any money, and I'm losing the money that I would be making if I stayed home and worked. But that isn't the major consideration.

I enjoy talking to people. I love the fans. Of course, I wouldn't be where I am if it weren't for the people who like my work. Because of that I feel as though I owe myself to them, and I always answer my fan mail, I always talk to the people on the phone who call me; I have people come into my studio and sit and watch me work. I enjoy all that. What happens, though, is that sometimes the fans tend to become too demanding. For instance, in the case of sketches, they feel that . . . I don't do sketches at conventions. I'm a commercial artist, I get paid for my work and I cannot sit down and do two hundred sketches for everyone who comes and asks me. I would have a line of people waiting there for sketches an I cannot do it for nothing and I cannot do it for five or ten dollars. For that reason, it's better for me not to do any sketches. If certain people think it is a prima donna type of thing on my part, they don't understand what the situation is.

I had a fan come here because he wanted to watch me paint. So fine, I was painting and sat with him for about two or three hours and then I had other things to do and said, "Sorry, but you'll have to excuse me now." That was fine, but he started telling me about other artists he's visited, and he criticized one of them. He said, "I went to see so-and-so at his studio and he was very nice for about fifteen minutes, but then he was too busy to take care of me." And I said, "Really! The man has to work!" And what do you say? If you're going to spend fifteen minutes with every fan that visits you, you could never do any work.

FEATURE: It's a matter of courtesy. Some people don't realize that you might like to talk, but you've also got to make a living.

I've noticed that at conventions, dealers, for example, would come up to you with piles of books for signatures and then turn around and sell them for more money because it had your autograph on it. Does that bother you?

BORIS: No. To me it is nothing to sign an autograph. I know some people will charge five dollars for an autograph, but I can sign hundreds of them. If these dealers feel that they can get more money because a book has my autograph on it, what am I going to do? I sign it for anyone who asks me for it. In a way it's flattering that some people will pay more money just for my autograph.

FEATURE: In a column in *The Buyer's Guide*, the reporter criticized you for not being "cooperative" or something like that at the Chicago convention, but later said you were more accessible in San Diego.

BORIS: That really amazed the hell out of me. At San Diego I was there for two days and I didn't sign nearly as many autographs as I did in Chicago. In Chicago, I was around all the time, just walking around the convention. So I don't know what was meant that I was not cooperative.

I'm always willing to do what the organizers of the convention ask me to do. If they want me to be on a panel, I am on a panel. In San Diego they asked me to give a three hour class, and I didn't know what I was going to be teaching there, but I did it nonetheless because they asked me to do it.

FEATURE: Are you going to any conventions soon?

BORIS: I'm going to do a couple of them. There's one in Maryland, and I'm also going to Japan. I have to put a limitation on how many I can go to, and can't go to as many as I'm invited to.

FEATURE: What's the convention in Japan involved with?

BORIS: They're going to have an exhibition of my paintings in one of the major department stores, which I'll be at, and there's also a convention at the same time. They also want to reprint my work there, both the book and isolated work.

FEATURE: You've done a lot of commission work over the past few years, and, as you say, you're working on a book of your own now. I assume this is a labor of love, putting together your own book?

BORIS: It's a lot of pressure. It's very difficult to keep it pure pleasure because one has deadlines. I also have my wife on my back to work on the book! If I could sit down and work at it when I felt like working on it, that's one thing, but I can't do that. It has to be done, but it is certainly a work of love.

FEATURE: Exactly what will the book be?

BORIS: The book is basically what I call erotic fantasy. When I say "erotic," we must not think of hardcore pornography, because it's not that by any means. It's very, very softcore and the only reason I would define it as erotic is because it depicts, not sexual situations . . . but total nudity.

FEATURE: Male and female?

BORIS: Yes. It has a soft sexual approach. And of course it's also involved with fantasy. The situations are really fantastic. They have creatures and . . . mostly humans with creatures.

FEATURE: Is this in collaboration with your wife?

BORIS: Yes, it is a collaboration in as much as she's writing poetry for the book after the paintings are done. The whole concept is about 80% mine.

FEATURE: How many paintings are you doing for the book?

BORIS: I'm doing thirty paintings, and if all goes according to schedule, it should be out in late Spring, 1981. I have done about ten of the paintings so far.

FEATURE: You're also working on the Star Wars paintings for Coca-Cola?

BORIS: I'm working on a series of posters. They are not really advertisements for Coca-Cola, per se, but are based on *The Empire Strikes Back*. They're going to be a bonus for people who buy Coca-Cola at the movie theaters where the movie is going to be shown. I have to do four posters for the series.

FEATURE: It's a great way to get people to buy Coke!

BORIS: It's nice because they're going to be printing a million of each poster. It's going to go all over the place.

FEATURE: Are you working on anything else at the moment?

BORIS: I'm planning on doing a series of limited edition sculpture.

FEATURE: How long have you been sculpting?

BORIS: I haven't done it yet [laughter]. I studied sculpture when I was in art school, so I wouldn't say that I've really never done it, but I haven't done it lately. But I know I can do it.

FEATURE: They'll be going through art galleries?

BORIS: Yes. I'd like to work in a size of about fifteen inches.

FEATURE: Fantasy related?

BORIS: Oh, yes. I love fantasy. I don't think I would go in any other direction. I'll also be drawing on the erotic theme.

FEATURE: One last question: do you have any advice for young artists who would like to get into the field of fantasy painting?

BORIS: This is a question which I am asked very often at conventions and from young people who visit me. They always want to hear what is the key to success. The basic thing, of course, is that you must have talent. There's no question about it, that's the main thing. Then, you have to be really, really persistent. Things don't come easy. Maybe for some people it's easier than for others, but in general, things are not really easy. You cannot be discouraged by setbacks or obstacles you come across trying to achieve what you want. You have to be willing to work hard, and also, never do anything just to get paid for it. By that I mean don't do it just to get it out of the way because you're going to get paid. Just do the best you can and really take pride in what you do, no matter what it is, whether it's refrigerators or furniture, or a Conan painting. Just do the best you can. ■

The Silver Age of Comics

by Richard Morrissey and Murray R. Ward

In the late 1950s, Atlas/Marvel was still publishing horror, suspense, west-

still publishing similar titles, but with

underway.

In our first installment of The

trends set in motion by these events.

the Justice League of America. The Green Lantern section was co-written by Ward, and the rest by Morrissey.

With the success of the revival of the Flash, and Adam Strange installed in a regular series, DC's next venture was the revival of another Golden Age

#s 22-24.

Whereas the two Flashes had very similar origins (both Jay Garrick and Barry Allen had gained super-speed powers in laboratory accidents), Hal

in the footsteps of Alan Scott. Julie

John Broome and artist Gil Kane, who reworked the original concept of Martin Nodell and Bill Finger. The original Green Lantern was a character of magical abilities, told by a mysterious voice to make a power ring from an ancient lantern, which in turn was

meteor. It was very much in the tradition of Aladdin's Lamp which inspired that Green Lantern's name

played a role in Julie Schwartz edited stories; such instances were rare indeed. The second Green Lantern, test pilot Hal Jordan, was to be a hero

not magic. This Green Lantern was one of many fearless individuals in

the immortal Guardians of the Universe, omniscient aliens from the planet Oa, to fight crime and evil. The Guardians gave Hal Jordan, and other members of the Green Lantern corps,

Unlike Alan Scott's, both rings could

give off a green beam of power that could be used to form objects, and both had to be charged at the battery every twenty-four hours. In fact, both Alan Scott and Hal Jordan recited the identical oath every time they charged their rings!

There was, however, a difference in the rings. The original Green Lantern had been co-created by Bill Finger, who had a similar hand in the creation of the Batman, and his character had been basically that of an extended Batman, who did most of his fighting with his fists and used the ring largely as a back-up. Over the years, the ring had naturally assumed more prominence and the new version of Green Lantern used it to a much greater extent, as it was, after all, his unique gift. (In later years, the popularity of the more physical Marvel heroes led to an attempt on Hal Jordan's part to rely more on his fists, but the reaction was not favorable and he soon returned to giving his ring priority once more, although like all superheroes, he was never adverse to using his fists when the occasion demanded it.) As a result, a ring like Alan Scott's, which worked on anything not made of wood, would have made Hal Jordan's Green Lantern all but omnipotent, especially as a much greater portion of his adventures took place on other planets and in space. So Hal Jordan's ring was given a "necessary impurity" that prevented it from working on anything colored yellow. (Schwartz once explained that yellow, a traditional symbol of cowardice, would naturally be anathema to a "man without fear.")

For Hal Jordan, the adventure began, as in previous Schwartz-edited series, with a mysterious "something" from the skies, this time the crash-landing spaceship of alien Green Lantern Abin Sur. Bequeathed the power ring and the responsibilities it entailed by the dying extraterrestial, Hal Jordan became a member of the illustrious Green Lantern corps of the Guardians of the Universe.

The Guardians appear modelled in part on a similar race of galactic caretakers featured in an earlier series written by John Broome, *Captain Comet* (Comet being a 1950s "missing link" hero in the evolution from Ultra-Man to Adam Strange — note the costume and milieu).

Although the full involvement of the Guardians was not revealed at first, and in fact they did not make an appearance in the *Showcase* issues, the promise of things to come was there and it was enough to propel Green Lantern into his own book in under a year, far more quickly than the Flash before him.

Even before the results of the new *Green Lantern* were in, Schwartz had begun the most ambitious revival of all, that of the group his heroes and many others in the 1940s had belonged to: the Justice Society of America. But, as this was now a definite new world of heroes (whether or not he had, in fact, yet decided firmly that they were in a different universe from the older heroes), Schwartz, who had never been terribly fond of the "Justice Society" name, decided to call this new group the Justice League of America, feeling that a "League," a familiar term from sports, sounded more appropriate for an active group of fighting people than a "Society." The *Justice League of America* replaced the *Viking Prince* and other strips featuring non-costumed heroes in *The Brave and the Bold*.

But, at that time when comic books no longer contained many different features as they had in the 1940s, there was some conflict as to who would belong to the JLA. The Flash would belong, of course, and so would Green Lantern, even though he was still only experimental, as at this point Schwartz was convinced (correctly) that GL too would win his own title before too long. Wonder Woman had long been a mainstay of the JSA, so surely Bob Kanigher would have no objections to her membership in the new team, but, apart from those three, all the then-current DC superheroes (again excluding Adam Strange and the like) were in the Weisinger/Schiff stable. Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff had no objection to the use of Aquaman and J'onn J'onzz, and soon Green Arrow, in the *JLA*, but they were more reluctant to see their headline characters, Superman and Batman, used by another editor.

It must be remembered that, at the time, the content and universes of the various DC titles were far more diverse than they are now. Despite the similarities, Weisinger wasn't doing quite the same thing with his Superman universe as Schwartz was with his "Earth-One." Indeed, he continued to give subtle indications that the current Superman still *was* the same Superman who had appeared since 1938, such as having the characters celebrate the 25th anniversary of Superman's arrival in Metropolis and making sure none of the background detail in the *Superboy* stories dated them any later than the middle 1930s. The two universes never quite jibed, and it wasn't until the middle 1970s, after Schwartz himself had taken over Superman's book upon Weisinger's retirement, that the present-day Superman's universe was to be fully reconciled with Earth-One, and the universe of the 1940s Superman with Earth-Two. Weisinger had always felt the way he did about Superman and Batman, both of whom he'd handled himself in the 1940s and as a result, they'd never been active members of the original JSA, though he had allowed them to be used as inactive honorary members who played an active part in one story and made brief appearances in a few more.

But Schwartz wanted a bit more from them this time, as did the DC executives, who felt that the absence of the popular Superman and Batman may well have been the reason the JSA didn't last beyond 1951. So a compromise was worked out: Superman and Batman would be JLA members, but they usually wouldn't have very active roles in the stories, or appear very prominently on the covers. Although they were later to become as active as the rest of the members, if not more, the compromise was agreeable to all at the time.

And, even without playing up Superman and Batman, the *JLA* proved a huge success. Gardner Fox, who had written most of the early *JSA* adventures, returned as regular *JLA* writer. It's always difficult to find an artist willing to put a large number of heroes into a single story, but Schwartz found one in Mike Sekowsky, a relative newcomer to DC. Sekowsky's style was rougher and more individualistic than those of Infantino and (at the time) Gil Kane, but it proved no detriment to the feature's popularity. It was very quickly decided to move the *Justice League of America* into a new book bearing that name, and try other experiments in *Brave and Bold*.

Inspired by the success of the *JLA*, even with a relatively offbeat artist, Schwartz went all-out in his next revival. Continuing down the ladder of success of the 1940s heroes, he came to Hawkman, who'd proved popular enough to displace the first Flash from the cover and lead position of many issues of *Flash Comics*, had taken over the chairmanship of the JSA early in the team's career and had retained it ever since, and who may well have received his own title if not for the paper shortage during World War II.

The Fly

by Gene Reed

Once DC revived the Flash and superheroes seemed to be catching on again, the Radio Comics Group reentered the superhero field after publishing teen humor books (*Archie*, etc.) for a decade. Their predecessor, the MLJ Group, had quite a stable of superheroes in the 1940s, including the Black Hood, Steel Sterling, the Shield and the Hangman. In 1959 the editors at Radio Comics turned to two men who had created half the heroes of the 1940s—Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Simon and Kirby created two characters for the Radio group: one, the Shield, took the name of the old MLJ hero and the super-soldier concept of Captain America, Fighting American and others. The Shield made his first appearance in a book with a rather unwieldy title: *The Double Life of Private Strong*. The title only lasted two issues.

More successful for Radio Comics was the second feature, *The Fly*, which debuted in August 1959.

The origin story combined elements of science, fantasy and magic: Tommy Troy, a teenager living in an orphanage, overhears the orphanage's superintendent talking with some gangsters about their scam to skim money from the orphanage. To insure his silence, Tommy is sent to stay with an old hermit couple reported to be the last of a line of witches and warlocks. Placed into servitude, Tommy one day discovers the attic room where the old couple practiced their black magic and finds, among other artifacts, a fly-shaped ring. The ring begins to glow and opens a dimensional portal from which Turan, the emissary of the Fly People (human shaped with fly heads), emerges. It is learned that the Fly People used to inhabit the Earth and "developed science and magic to a degree higher than the humans even dream about," but that the "magic was adopted by power hungry despots" who caused a gaseous explosion which "destroyed most of (the) race!" Although most of those who survived were turned into what we know as flies, some escaped to another dimension, and have waited for "one person . . . pure of heart" to carry on their war against greed and crime on Earth. Tommy rubs the magic ring and is transformed into the adult Fly.

Tommy evolved from a teenaged boy to an adult within the first five issues, during which time he, as the Fly, primarily fought common gangsters. Also introduced in the first issue was his girl friend, Dolly Lake.

Simon and Kirby only remained with the series for four issues, but brought an innovation to comics which Simon dubbed "the Wide Angle Scream." This was a two-page spread, usually the centerspread of the book, with a splash panel stretching across the top two-thirds. The "Wide Angle Scream" reproduced here is from *The Fly* #1. This bit of artistic excitement continued through two major artist changes.

After issue 4, the writers of the series are not known, although it is highly likely that Jerry Siegel wrote many of the issues after #6. John Giunta drew the book from issues 6 through 10, whereupon John Rosenberger assumed the art chores.

The Radio Comics heroes continued through the early 1960s, and even expanded with the revival of the Black Hood, Steel Sterling and others, but they never caught on as did the DC and later Marvel heroes of the time.

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A Cloudy Dawn in Derby by Joseph Crockett

As the super-heroes began to return to the newsstands in earnest in the mid-fifties, John Santangelo's Charlton Comics was producing a very mixed bag of periodicals. A publisher primarily of music and song lyrics magazines, Charlton had dabbled in the comics field with a small number of titles since the mid-forties. That number had increased dramatically in the early fifties, as old-line companies folded and Santangelo bought up their inventories and acquired their licensed properties. Though most of the titles which were continued under Charlton came from the old Fawcett Comics stable, a few—such as *Bullseye* and the ironically titled *Win-a-Prize*—came from Simon and Kirby's Prize Comics line. By mid-decade, however, few of the Fawcett heroes remained vital at Charlton, with the notable exception of Nyoka of the Jungle. Only the westerns, which Fawcett had under license—books based on the supposed exploits of actors such as Rocky Lane, Tex Ritter, and Lash Larue—seemed to thrive at the little comics company in Derby, Connecticut, and even those books would falter and die with the arrival of the sixties.

However, buried away almost out of sight amid the cowboys, the handful of romance books, and that perennial Charlton mainstay, *Hot Rods and Racing Cars*, there were some heroes to be found in the Charlton line.

Charlton's weird horror title, *The Thing*, hadn't lasted long past the birth of the Comics Code Authority, but its issue numbering continued on under the title *Blue Beetle*! For four bizarre issues comics readers were treated, if that is the proper term, to reprints of the old Fox *Blue Beetle* stories from the early 1940s. And then, without warning, the title was changed once again . . .to *Mr. Muscles*.

Now, the name Mr. Muscles does not sound all that thrilling to the ear of the latter-day comics fan. And the news that the gym-suit clad Muscles had a sidekick called Kid Muscles is not likely to set any hearts aflutter either. However, *Mr. Muscles* is notable for being one of three hero-types created for Charlton by Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel. Unfortunately, even Mr. Siegel's talents weren't enough to keep *Mr. Muscles* going, and the book died after two issues, and *Nature Boy* proved to be the title with the greatest longevity of the trio, lasting a big three issues. *Nature Boy*, though, remains an esoteric comic of special interest to super-hero fans, as Nature Boy's origin story in the first issue—inexplicably numbered issue #3—teamed Siegel with then-fledgling artist John Buscema.

It was not until the end of the fifties that Charlton was to come up with a super-hero of lasting appeal.

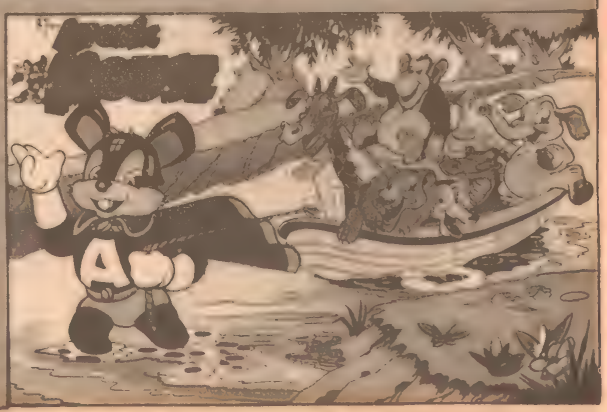
His name was Captain Atom!

Blasting onto the scene in *Space Adventures* #33, the good Captain was the first "nuclear accident" super-hero of the second heroic age of comics. Trapped in an Atlas missle, equipped with a nuclear warhead which was ready and armed for a near-space atomic test, U.S. Air Force Captain N. Christoper Adam was . . . well, disintegrated at the heart of a nuclear explosion. And, through a freak, unexplained accident of science, he was reintegrated back on earth. All in all, it couldn't have been the nicest way to acquire super-powers, but it certainly was effective. Transformed into the atomic powered Captain Atom, the Air Force fly-boy found himself possessing incredible strength and speed, as well as being able to fly and hurl nuclear fireballs. Obviously, Captain Atom wasn't a fellow you'd want to fool around with!

For over a year, Captain Atom battled aliens and saboteurs with appropriate nods to the Cold War conventions of the times. Moreover, his stories were, with one known exception, skillfully rendered by Steve Ditko in a dynamic fanciful style which foreshadowed the brilliance of his later *Spider-Man* and *Dr. Strange* stories.

Alas, Charlton seemed to be unready for super-heroes. By issue #43 of *Space Adventures*, Captain Atom had disappeared, not to return for nearly five years.

And, as 1961 drew to a close, the only Charlton character still being published who could even remotely be considered a super-hero was a tough little fellow known as . . .Atomic Mouse!



Joseph Crockett is a freelance writer and life-long aficionado of what are currently called "Esoteric Comics."

Moreover, Hawkman had often been mentioned by nostalgic older fans as one of their favorite features: he'd had good writing by Fox and later Bob Kanigher, and had been drawn first by Sheldon Moldoff, whose visuals were swiped from Alex Raymond but still stunning, and later by Joe Kubert. Even then Kubert had been impressive, though a bit distorted and unfinished; now he had developed a mature and unique style that worked very well on Kanigher's war titles. Reuniting Fox and Kubert with a new version of Hawkman, Schwartz decided, could have truly stunning results.

Like Green Lantern, this Hawkman had a more science fiction-oriented slant than his predecessor, but in other ways Fox stuck even closer to the original than Broome and Kanigher had on their revivals. He had an almost identical costume, and even the same name, Carter Hall, as his predecessor. This time, though, the name was actually an Anglicization of his true name, Katar Hol, for this Hawkman was a policeman from the planet Thanagar, studying police methods on Earth. The original Hawkman had had still another type of sidekick that had been popular at the time: a girlfriend named Shiera who'd acquired similar powers and taken the identity of Hawkgirl. There was a Hawkgirl in the revival, too, also named Shiera, but many of the traditional cliches of the situation were abandoned this time. The new Hawkgirl was much more of an equal partner (none of this nonsense of the hero trying to discourage her from taking on "a man's job," which most such teams of the 1940s had been afflicted with), and, rather than having one of those eternally-unconsummated relationships that had been all earlier heroes and heroines could aspire to, Hawkman and Hawkgirl were married from the beginning! They were the first married superheroes to appear regularly in their own feature, and they were to see many more follow them.

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Hawkman appeared in three issues of *Brave & Bold*, and the fans were thrilled. Everything seemed to point to yet another Schwartz success. But, for the first time on a Schwartz revival, the sales figures didn't echo the enthusiasm in fandom, and no *Hawkman* title was forthcoming. Three more *Brave & Bold* issues featuring the character were tried, with the costume changed very slightly and even more finely-rendered nighttime scenes on Earth and exotic alien scenery on Thanagar, but still no conclusive hit. Unwilling to give up the character, Julie gave him the second spot in *Mystery in Space*, but with a more polished, slicker artist, Murphy Anderson. This proved successful enough for a *Hawkman* book to appear at last, in 1964, but it wasn't the same, and didn't last very long. Under Anderson, the lean, acrobatic Hawkman and the ethereally lovely Hawkgirl became just another muscular, curly-haired hero and pretty heroine, and the loving detail of the Kubert issues seemed to have lost its depth with Anderson's polishing. The Fox/Anderson *Hawkman* stories were still competent and well-conceived, but not nearly as unique as the *Brave & Bold* issues. From then on, most of the Schwartz revivals seemed a bit more limited, all striving for the polished Anderson look as an ideal. The failure of the original Hawkman seemed to have convinced Schwartz, at least for a time, that there was a limit to experimentation.

It fell to other people to take the next steps that Schwartz and his writers, after the Hawkman experiment, drew back from. Even if his latest try hadn't done as well as the others, there was no denying the fact that he'd been responsible for three of the most successful titles of recent years, one of them, the Justice League of America, one of the best-selling titles of any publisher. It proved that a team of superheroes could be a big success, even one featuring relatively recent characters and writing and art styles slightly different from what was currently most fashionable. In an attempt to duplicate that title's success, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby went off in their own direction and came up with *The*

Justice League of America

by Murray R. Ward

LET ME HANDLE STARRO! MY POWER RING WILL OVERCOME IT!
GREEN LANTERN!
BUT AS THE GREEN GLADIATOR SWOOPS DOWN OUT OF THE SKY HE IS CAUGHT BY A MENTAL BEAM FROM STARRO..

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The pride of the All-American group was *All Star Comics*, in which all its major characters teamed up to challenge the sales superiority of Superman and Batman as the Justice Society of America, comics' first superhero team. Thus, as history repeats itself, it was only a matter of time before Julius Schwartz's revamped champions of justice joined forces in a similar coalition, and he wasted little time in launching the concept. Rather than wait until he had brought back some of the other JSA members in modernized guise, Schwartz began a trial series of adventures for his new team comic while Green Lantern was still awaiting promotion into his own title.

When they made their bow in *The Brave and the Bold* #28, the Justice League of America consisted of Flash, Green Lantern, and three characters from non-Schwartz-edited titles filling out the ranks: Aquaman, Wonder Woman and J'Onn J'Onzz, the Manhunter from Mars. As in *All-Star* #3, the debut of the Justice Society of America, the Justice League of America had their first official meeting without any kind of origin story for the group. Also as in the 1940s version, Superman and Batman were charter, albeit inactive, members. In both cases, the Flash was the unofficial chairman. Although Barry Allen led a much smaller grouping than Jay Garrick's initial gathering in *All-Star*, the readers were no less enthusiastic. While there had been such short-lived associations as timely's All-Winners Squad (two issues) and Fawcett's Crime Crusaders Club (one issue) in the late 1940s, and such aggregations of costumed, though non-super-powered adventures as the Challengers of the Unknown, the first full-fledged superteam since the Justice Society was their Silver Age counterparts, who quickly gained their own title, *Justice League of America*.

Schwartz called on Gardner Fox to provide the type of science fiction-oriented problem-solving action stories for the Justice League that had proven so successful for Adam Strange. This combined with the natural excitement of seeing some half-dozen costumed heroes working in tandem, made the book an immediate standout. The series' only regular supporting character, honorary member "Snapper" Carr, a teenager whose sometimes incomprehensible "hip" dialogue broke the relative tedium of listening to the "square" adult members talking shop, was introduced in the first *Brave & Bold* tale.

As with *Adam Strange*, the initial installments were penciled by Mike Sekowsky, who remained as the series' regular artist when it was awarded its own book. The usual practice on the early issues was for Murphy Anderson to ink Sekowsky's covers, which depicted the five most active members (six with the addition of Green Arrow in issue #4) in action or escaping a death trap, while Bernard Sachs inked the interiors.

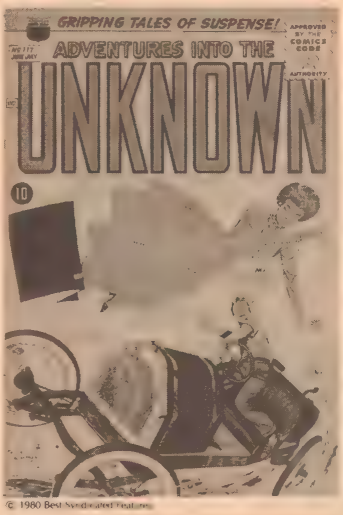
Unlike the single hero titles, which featured two stories per issue and occasional full length stories, *Justice League* with its huge cast featured full length stories in each issue from the outset, dividing the action into three or four chapters in which the heroes met to discuss the menace and divided into sub-teams, combatted the villains, and regrouped to tie up the loose ends, respectively. Like Fox's one-two-three formula on *Adam Strange*, this predictable story format became somewhat of a standing joke to the readers, but (and this may be difficult to imagine now, when superteams are crawling out of the woodwork) the sheer wonderment of all those heroes in one book (!) kept the readers enthralled for the most part.

With the creation of the Justice League, it can be said that the life of the Silver Age of Comics was assured a long and healthy span. Through this team, the heretofore separate world of Superman and Batman would be joined to that of Schwartz's heroes to form today's DC universe. Future heroes (both Schwartz's and others) would have a ready made meeting place with their peers and other teams would be formed in imitation and competition (including the eventual revival of the Justice Society itself), and eventually, the Marvel line would be formed when one day in 1961, Martin Goodman said to Stan Lee, "Why don't we do something like DC's Justice League?"

Fantastic Four. How that title succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, and how it gave rise to a completely different direction of experimentation that made Marvel Comics the front-runner in the field, will be discussed in future installments of this series.

Almost two decades have passed since 1961, during which time Stan Lee, like Julius Schwartz before him, reached what he considered to be the limits of innovation and the *Fantastic Four* has become as long-standing a fixture in comic books as *Superman* was at the beginning of the Silver Age. But the spirit of innovation pioneered by Julie Schwartz, and extending to other editors as diverse as Mort Weisinger and Stan Lee, deserves to be remembered even now, when more innovation might do a great deal to improve the overused characters and the existing writing and art styles of today.

20 Years Ago this Month



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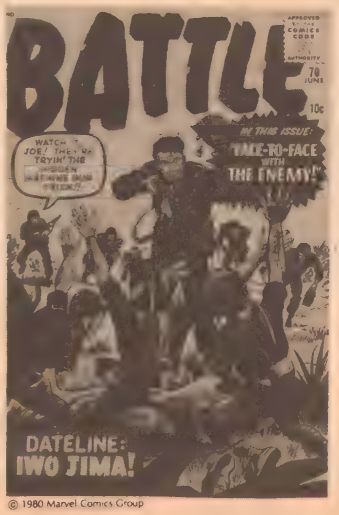

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CONVERSATION

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The Fandom Zone

A complete section of useful information, fanzine reviews and columns geared to you, the involved comics fan

Fandom Origins by Ted White

The following is part of a letter received from Ted White, editor Heavy Metal, *former editor of* Amazing *and* Fantastic *and long-time comics and sf fan.*

His observations and recollections offer an interesting, and knowledgeable view of comics fandom as it was in the 1950s, and is the second in a continuing series of "Fandom Origins" we will be offering in these pages. There were many people involved in various aspects of fandom in its beginnings and each person has their unique perspective with which to share that time with us.

I read the "fan" material in *Comics Feature* with bemusement. Comics fandom owes literally everything good about itself, including all its terminology, to SF fandom where it was all invented — yet few comics fans seem aware of this and some, like Jerry Bails, seem to think they re-invented the wheel.

Peter Gillis' piece was interesting, but he is wrong in his characterization of SF fandom as a place where the fans don't want to become pros. Certainly SF fandom has more community of its own, and the accent isn't on money the way it is for too many comics fans, but the vast majority of SF pros are former fans.

Jerry Bails, on the other hand, seems to think that he created comics fandom. He's flatly wrong. Comics fandom was alive and flourishing before he'd ever heard of it, and I speak as one who was there at the time. (In fact, *Squa Tront* credits a pamphlet I published about Superman in 1952 as the first comics fan publication.) I was aware of a comics fandom in the late forties, although I never took part in it. Comics fandom was then confined to collectors who corresponded with each other and swapped comics and original art (no fanzines, nothing organized). It included Eldon K. Everett, out in Washington state, Ronnie Graham (who passed his collection on to me when he joined the armed service in the early fifties), and a variety of others whose names elude my memory now. Then, as now, some were keener on strips than comicbooks, some were into superheroes (as I was then), and some were not, and some were collectors of specific artists. I know a few who collected *every single comic coming out*, and since distribution was as spotty then as in more recent times, they'd buy copies of comics for each other too. In the early fifties I had over 10,000 comics — but I was a piker compared to some of the guys I knew.

Since I was also an SF fan, I knew about fanzines and fan terminology, and it didn't occur to me that I was breaking fresh ground with my Superman fanzine — which was, in any case, more or less a oneshot ("more or less" because it went through four editions, each a little better than those which preceded it).

I credit Bhob Stewart with the first real comics fanzine, *The EC Fan Bulletin*. His zine gave a focal point to EC fandom before EC launched the EC Fan-Addicts club (of which I was, if memory serves, #936), and inspired a number of other EC fanzines. *Squa Tront* has been running an excellent history of EC fanzines by John Benson, which I recommend to Bails.

It can be argued that EC fandom wasn't, per se, *comics* fandom, but in fact it was the most visible aspect of comics fandom, and the wider world of comics beyond EC often impinged on EC fanzines. The last major EC fanzine was Ron Parker's *Hoohah* (written up in *Pageant* magazine around 1960), but *Mad* had inspired Satire fandom and its fanzines, out of which came people like Skip Williamson, et al, and there are direct links with today's comics fandom.

It should be borne in mind that superhero comics had fallen upon bad times in the fifties. *All-Star Comics* had become *All-Star Western; Sensation Comics* dropped all the superhero backup stories in favor of romances while keeping Wonder Woman on for a while, and then became a "mystery" (cleaned-up horror) comic. Only Superman and Batman and Wonder Woman remained at DC; Fawcett dropped Captain Marvel and

sold their titles to Charleton; it was a time for mystery, adventure, western, romance, science fiction and horror comics. The Flash would not reappear until *Showcase* #4, and then appeared infrequently until around the end of the decade. Comics fandom reflected this — and was based on what was best at the time, which was basically EC.

Modern comics fandom was born not with *Alter Ego*, but Dick Lupoff's *Xero*, which featured in its first issue Lupoff's fond memories of Captain Marvel, "The Big Red Cheese." I did a followup piece for the next issue, "The Spawn of M.C. Gaines." These and subsequent pieces were published under the running head, "All In Color for a Dime," and later Lupoff and Don Thompson edited two books of that title, featuring revised or rewritten versions of the pieces from *Xero*.

"All In Color for a Dime" had an enormous impact at the time (1960), although *Xero* was an SF fanzine itself. And it predated *Alter Ego* #1, which I remember receiving when it came out.

What croggles me about modern comics fandom is the way it has picked up and treated as its own inventions everything actually invented by SF fandom years earlier — right down to names and terms. Apas, for instance. The original amateur press associations were mundane and were formed in the earliest years of this century. Some, like the National Amateur Press Association, are still going (or were the last time I looked, several years ago). But these were associations of amateur printers who were more concerned with nice typography than real content. H.P. Lovcraft was an apan. Don Wollheim thought SF fandom should have its own apa, and formed the Fantasy Amateur Press Ass'n (FAPA) in 1937. It is still in existence. Unlike the mundane apas, SF apas have limited memberships and activity requirements (mundane apas are bogged down with membership deadwood), and until the fifties SF apas were all quarterly. The Vanguard APA was formed in the early forties by SF pros, but failed after a few years. In the late forties the Spectator Amateur Press Society (SAPS) was formed by fans disgruntled with FAPA. In 1953 the Whimsical APA (WAPA) was formed around the idea of no central mailer, but each person having a publishing deadline which brought a WAPAzine out once each week. It lasted less than a year, but inspired the Cult (1954) which introduced the idea of an apa with a single zine published in rotation (originally, once every two weeks; later, once every three weeks) by each member in turn, with membership restricted to 13. (The Cult is still going, last I heard; one of its mainstay members over the last ten years has been George Scithers, editor of *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine*; I dropped out in the mid-sixties; I was a founding member.) In England the Off-Trails Magazine Publishers' Ass'n (OMPA) was formed along traditional lines (quarterly mailings). A Cult-like group called the Carbon Reproduced Amateur Press (CRAP) flared up in 1960 and died in 1962, to be reborn as APA-X (later: Apex), the first "private" or "secret" apa. Since then apas have proliferated wildly, and the best (Lilapa, Apassembly, Apathy) are private or secret: small collections of friends, usually mostly gafiated BNFs. In the mid-sixties the NYC fangroup, the Fanoclasts, started up Apa-F, a weekly apa. It was killed with its 69th mailing, but it inspired the LA fan club, LASFS (the oldest continuing SF fan club in the world) to start Apa-L, which I believe still exists, on a weekly basis, mailings being contributed to, collated, and handed out at each weekly meeting of the club.

One of the apas you list, SFPA, was (and perhaps still is) an SF-fandom apa, started in the early sixties.

Jay Zilber's "Confessions" are remarkable for the way he has encapsulated SF fandom in his own experiences. All the terms he uses, from WKF to BNF to gafia to FIAWOL to LoC, are SF fan terms, all but a very few invented in the late thirties and early forties. (FIJAGH first came to prominence in the late fifties as the title of Dick Ellington's OMPAzine; LoC in the early sixties, sometimes pronounced "yellow sea" . . .)

I point all this out in order to underline the enormous debt comics fandom owes to SF fandom, and to point up the fact that comics fandom was created, for the most part, by SF fans who brought the concepts and terminology of SF fandom with them.

Fandom Almanac

Comics Clubs

If you belong to a comics club and would like to be listed in this space, please send all pertinent information to COMICS FEATURE.

Fullerton, CA. WEST COAST COMICS CLUB. Meets at Fullerton Science Lecture Hall #121, California State University, 7:00 p.m. Contact: Barry Short, 420 West 4th Street, San Dimas, CA 91773 (714) 599-2488.

Maplewood, N.J. COMICS CLUB MAPLEWOOD. Meets at 29 Norfolk Avenue, 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. Contact: Comic Club Maplewood, P. O. Box 65, Maplewood, NJ 07040.

Mt. Prospect, IL. PROSPECT HIGH SCHOOL COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Prospect High School, Room 130, 801 W. Kensington Rd., every Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. Contact: R. Marr.

Nepean, Ontario, Canada. INTERNATIONAL COMIC COLLECTOR'S CLUB. Publishes a quarterly magazine and bulletin. Membership is $10/year. Contact: Don Coopman, 131 Monterey Drive, Nepean, Ontario, Canada K2Y 7A9.

Phoenix, AZ. PHOENIX COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Quality Inn West, 2420 W. Thomas, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact: Neil Cohen, 3824 N. 15th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85018 (602) 227-8701.

Pittsburgh, PA. PITTSBURGH COMIX CLUB. Meets at Eide's Comix & SF Shop, 11 Federal Street, every second Saturday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Contact: Ben Pondexter, 827 Anaheim, Pittsburgh, PA 15210.

St. Louis, MO. SPECTOR COMICS CLUB. Meets at Century Bowl, 7508 Michigan, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Contact: Anthony Gladish, 3917 Ohio Street, St. Louis, MO 63118.

Urbana, IL. CHAMPAIGN-URBANA COMIC CLUB. Meets at the Illinois Union Building, Room 215, 712 W. Illinois, Urbana, every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Mel DeSart.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada. VANCOUVER COMIC BOOK CLUB. Publishes the VCBC Bulletin and sponsors conventions (V-Con). Contact: VCBC, P.O. Box 48873, Bentall Sta., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7X 1A8.

Conventions

Jun. 1. CHICAGO MINI-CON. Pick-Congress Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Opens: 11:00 am. Admission: 75¢.

Jun. 1. THE SUNDAY SHOW NORTH. Lyndhurst Holiday Inn, NJ. Rt. 17 and Rt. 3, or NJ Turnpike Exit 16. Hours:10 - 4. Admission: $1.00.

Jun. 8. PHIL SEULING'S COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE. New location: New York Statler Hilton, 7th Ave. & 33rd St., Hours: 10-5. Admission: free.

Jun. 14 - 15. THE GREAT MOTION PICTURE & TELEVISION, COMICS & SCIENCE FICTION FAIR. Glendale Civic Auditorium, 1401 N. Verdugo Rd., Glendale, CA. Hours: 6/14: 12-9; 6/15: 11-5. Admission: $3.75. Contact: Alex Klein, 1252 Sepulueda, Van Nuys, CA 91405.

Jun. 19 - 21. HOUSTON FANTASY FESTIVAL. Shamrock Hilton, Houston. Guests: Chris Claremont, John Byrne, George Perez, Frank Brunner, Alex Toth, Harrison Ellenshaw. Admission: $12.00. Contact: Houston Fantasy Festival, P.O. Box 12613, Houston, TX 77087.

Jun. 21-22. CREATION. Travelodge Int'l Inn, JFK Airport, New York. Guests: Dave Prowse (Darth Vader), Julie Schwartz, Joe Kubert, Howard Chaykin, Jim Starlin, etc. Admission: $5/day, $9/both days. Contact: Creation: 421 7th Ave., #908, NY, NY 10001.

Jun. 28-29. CREATION BALTIMORE. Lord Baltimore Hotel, Baltimore & Hanover Sts. Admission: $5/day, $9/both days. Contact: Creation: 421 7th Ave., #908, NY, NY 10001.

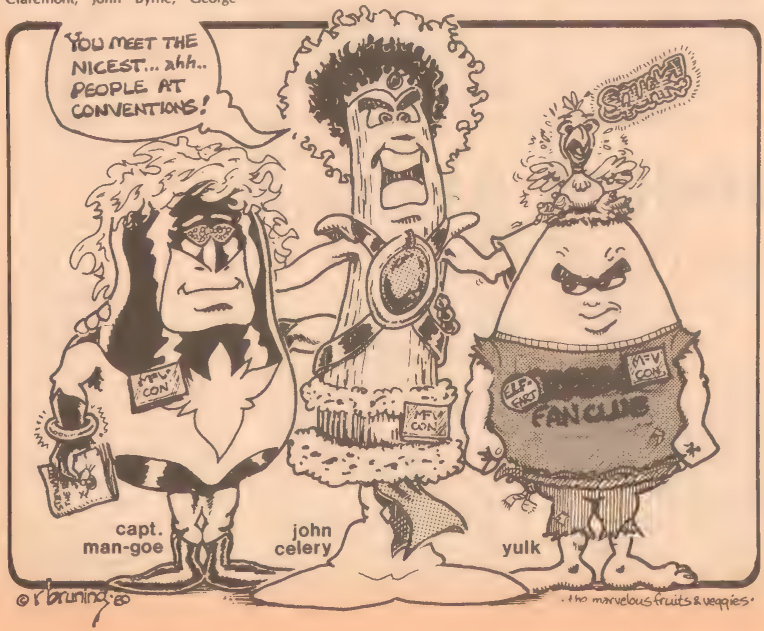
Jun. 29. RELAX-A-CON COMIC BOOK AND COLLECTORS SHOW. York Township Hall, 1502 Meyers Rd., Lombard, IL. Admission: $1.00. Contact: B.J.'s Comic Corner, 260 N. Ardmore Ave, Villa Park, IL 60181.

July 4-6. NEW YORK COMIC ART CONVENTION. New York Statler Hilton, 7th Ave & 33rd St. Guests: Harlan Ellison, Mike Kaluta, Wendy Pini, Hembeck, Boris, Bob Kane, etc. Admission: $5/day, or $12.50/three days in advance. Contact: Sea Gate Distributors, 65-14 20th Ave., Bklyn, NY 11204.

July 18-20. CHICAGO COMICON. Pick Congress Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave. Guest of Honor: Roy Thomas; other guests include Marshall Rogers and others. Contact: Chicago Comicon, 1219a W. Devon, Chicago, IL 60660.

July 26-27. CREATION PHILADELPHIA. Phila. Sheraton, 17th & JFK Blvd. Admission: $5/day, $9/both days. Contact: Creation: 421 7th Ave., #908, NY, NY 10001.

If you are running a convention, or know of one in your area, and would like to be listed in this space, please send all pertinent information to COMICS FEATURE.



Fandom Zone

Mickey Mouse © Walt Disney Productions

by Bob Jennings

Welcome to the first installment of Ride the Tiger. *This is a fanzine review column. It would probably be best to start off by filling in a little general information about the column and how it will be conducted.*

This will be a fanzine review column, as opposed to a column which merely lists the name, prices, addresses and contents page of various fan publication. The need for a review column devoted to fanzines should be fairly obvious to anyone who has been involved with this hobby for longer than three weeks.

The world is literally filled with thousands of different fanzines; all types, all shapes, and more important, all prices. Last year alone there were more than one thousand comics-oriented fanzines published, and about four times as many science fiction fanzines. A great many of these publications were heavily advertised in the various related ad publications and elsewhere. The editors and publishers invariably promised their readers the world with a satin ribbon around it, and featured glowing reports of the wonders of their products.

The actual worth of many fanzines does not approach the magnitude of claims related in their advertising copy. With the enormous number of fanzines available, a review column covering the field can be a useful guidepost through all this mire, pointing out which issues meet your interests and needs, and helping you to steer clear of others which do not contain subject matter you would find useful.

In order to make this column work successfully, it would be well to keep a few things in mind. I myself publish a comics-oriented fanzine, called The Comic World. *Let me state immediately that I do not consider myself the perfect editor/publisher, nor do I consider* The Comic World *to be the greatest thing to hit the world since store-sliced bread. I furthermore do not expect every fanzine to be an imitation of my own product, nor do I anticipate using my own fanzine as a rote model in the grading of other publications.*

On the other hand I do have some very strong prejudices and opinions. It would be well to let you know what these are, right up front, so you can compare your own interests against mine, and make appropriate adjustments. For example, I happen to dislike, intensely, interviews. Interviews, whether between fans and pros, or fans and fans or any other combination, impress me as being pointless, rambling, uninformative and basically dull as hell. I mention this, because as much as I hate to believe it, I understand there are some people who actually enjoy reading interviews. I am told there are fans who actually get pleasure from the things. If you happen to be one of these odd people, it shouldn't take much imagination on your part to note my strong anti-interview sentiment and filter it out before making your own decision on the fanzines being reviewed. If I let you know my own particular personality quirks regarding the publications that will be covered, you can compensate for or otherwise discount those prejudices which do not jibe with your own, and hopefully these reviews can become a useful guide to any reader, no matter what his own particular outlook may be.

There are a few other things to keep an eye out for. I do not, as a general rule, like amatuer comic strips or strip zines. I also dislike short, pointless articles, or articles which are poorly constructed, or material which is written with little planning and has not been properly researched.

So far as the fanzines themselves, this column will lean heavily toward reviews of comics-oriented fanzines, although nothing will be categorically excluded from these pages. Except for outstanding exceptions, apa zines will be excluded. The reason for this is that apa zines are produced for closed readerships and are generally not available to people who are not members of the particular apa (amateur press alliance). Xerox or personality fanzines with highly limited circulations (like twenty-five copies or less) will also not be reviewed, for the obvious reason that the editor would never be able to supply copies to outsiders should any outside people bother to order copies.

In addition I will not, as a general rule, be concerned either with the highly professional semi-pro publications, or the so-called stable entries in the hobby. By this I mean I will not make a practice of reviewing average issues of such fanzines as Buyer's Guide, RB-CC, Comics Reader, *or the like. From time to time some mention may be made of outstanding special issues.*

By the same token, pro efforts, underground comics, and house organs such as FOOM *and* The Amazing World of DC Comics *will not be covered at all. This is a column for fanzines, not a free advertising showcase for the cash-oriented professional publishers of the world.*

On the other hand there may be exceptions to all these rules.

Grading will be done on your typical school basis, going from F, the worst, up through the letters to A, the best. Plus and minus marks may be added for your further confusion. From time to time I may come across fanzines which I refuse to rate, for various reasons. In such cases the various reasons will usually be explained.

Fanzine editors who desire to see their product reviewed here should send copies to me at the following address —

Bob Jennings
RFD2, Whiting Rd.
Dudley, Mass. 01570

Fandom Zone

BEM #27

$2.00 or 5/$10.00 all copies sent airmail, Martin Lock, 3 Marlow Court, Britania Square, Worchester, ENGLAND WR1, 3DP. 8½ x 11", 36 pages, photo offset.

Postal rates being what they are, I don't get to see too many British fanzines, so it was an interesting experience to read over the lateset issue of *BEM*. *BEM* bills itself as a comics news fanzine, but seems to be a lot more than a news dispenser.

The cover lends off with a color cover and launches immediately into comic news. The British comics scene is covered in detail, and so is the American comics scene. I found this interest in American comics somewhat unusual, until it dawned on me that a lot of British fans get their comics shipped over from the States, not being content to rely on the Marvel and (presumably DC) reprint efforts over there. Another thing that struck me as being a bit odd was the fact that there was considerably more space devoted to American comic news than to the British scene, even though further reading leads me to believe there are considerably more British weekly comics on the stands than there are American comics coming out on a monthly basis. The chief topic of interest throughout the entire publication seems to be Marvel comics, both the British and US versions.

As a fanzine *BEM* is very well put together. The issue is typeset in extremely small print with well done illustrations throughout. The quality of the art and the quality of the production in general is tight, but very friendly. This is a fanzine without pompous pretentions of grandeur, a fanzine that aims to serve the fans and whose producers have a genuine love of the comics field. British and American readers also get their money's worth on this one. $2.00 may seem like a lot of money to pay for a fanzine. On the other hand you are getting roughly 50,000 words of reading material, plus airmail delivery to the States.

The lead item in the issue is a long interview with Dez Skinn, who was at the time of the interview, the head of Marvel Comics in Britain. He has since relinquished that job. I normally don't like interviews, but perhaps due to my almost total lack of knowledge of the British comics scene, I found this one both readable and very informative. Some unusual information came out of all this. For example, it was a bit of a shock to me to discover that in Britain 98% of the comics distributed get sold. This with most of the comics coming out on a weekly basis. British Marvel sells-through about 2.5 million comics per month, which ain't half bad all things considered.

I was also surprised to learn that superheroes are not the big item in British comics. You would certainly never guess that from reading *BEM*. The fanzine is solidly devoted to action superhero comics and the fans thereof. There is some interesting stuff on Marvel's British merchandising program (it's very small) and comments on fans and their reaction to the British Marvel productions.

The interview is also accompanied by a series of satirical cartoons produced by Key Sutherland. They are hilarious, and vent some of the fans' anger toward unpopular decisions Skinn has made after taking over British Marvel. The thing I found unique about this is that editor Lock showed all the cartoons to Skinn in advance and got his agreement to running them with the interview. I cannot imagine a single American comic book personality who would be as gracious and good natured in a similar situation.

The issue also comes with a few comic book reviews. British fans are definitely different. The reviewers hated *The X-Men* and loved *Time Warp*. Obviously there's more than an ocean separating most American and British fans.

There is a four page comic strip by editor Lock and Dave Harwood, which I actually found to be pretty good, despite my coming in on the middle of a continued story. At four pages an issue in a less than bi-monthly publication, this sequence will probably finish up about the time I'm on my deathbed. The art was very clean and professional, with a good grasp of backgrounds and figures. Some of the people looked a trifle stiff, but this will undoubtedly correct itself in time. A very pleasing effort.

There is a hit-and-name-'em fanzine review column, and a similar effort devoted to underground comics. I got very little out of either one of these. There is not enough information presented to enable a reader to form opinions about the material discussed unless he happens to have already seen the stuff being discussed. This is a self-defeating proposition for any review column.

The heart of the issue is the letter column. The letter column in fact takes up about half of the entire magazine, and provides missives from fans, readers, and pros alike. I haven't seen that many British fanzines, but based on extensive reading of American fan efforts I would have to say that *BEM* runs the best letter column in existence. The letters are picked for interest and readability. The letter writers have something to say, and they manage to express themselves in clear fashion. Most of them obviously have an honest interest in the hobby and even the ones with an axe to grind do so with considerably more style than one might expect. The column covers thousands of different subjects, and everybody is free to join in. The editorial replies are short, but they are concise and are inserted exactly where a response is necessry. For reasons that escape me, letter columns, indeed fan correspondence itself, which is the backbone of science fiction fandom and used to be the core of comics fandom as well, is a dying art these days in the United States. If you'd like to see what a fresh, friendly, enthusiastic letter column is all about, the way letter columns used to be when this hobby was young, check out *BEM*. Again, a superlative piece of editing, and well worth the price of the fanzine alone.

There are also a few small strip-liners in an attempted humor vein. They are not successful, nor are they well drawn. There is also part of an interview with Rick Marschall in which he says all the things he's been saying in all the other interviews he's given out, only in a more tedious fashion. Dull, incredibly dull.

Despite these few flaws, I found *BEM* a very enjoyable product. Even without knowledge of the British fan scene, I found myself getting involved easily in the discussions, the reviews, the commentary, even the Dez Skinn interview. This is a sharp, clean, effective piece of work, and something you would do well to try.

RATING A

Fandom Zone

COMIC CELLAR #1

50¢, no sub schedule listed, Neil Fifer, 50 Hanover Rd S.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2V 3J4, 8½ x 11", 30 pgs, photo offset.

The *Comic Cellar* is the very first issue of a new Canadian fanzine, an adzine at that. In his rather brief editorial, Neil Fifer points out that the primary focus of conventional comic adzines past and present has been almost exclusively the American market. There are thousands of Canadian fans who deserve their own special market place, and he plans on making *Comic Cellar* both a market place and a showcase for Canadian material.

Well, the sentiment is good anyway.

First issues are unique creatures. They have special problems, and one must be careful in making sweeping statements about them, especially since nine times out of ten the editors are just getting their feet wet in the publishing business and are bound to make a lot of changes, both major and minor, in the coming months.

Still, the first impression I got from *Comic Cellar* was rather pleasant. The fanzine has loose, comfortable graphics, and apparently has the regular services of several very talented artists. The layout itself is roomy and not at all crowded, a major problem with most first issues, while articles and features are all typeset.

A combination of both articles/ features and advertising material seems to be what *Comic Cellar* is striving for here. Unfortunately the material for this first issue is a bit on the skimpy side. The lead is a telephone interview with Bob Overstreet, producer of the *Comic Book Price Guide*.

I'm certainly no fan of interviews, but I found this one to be interesting and relatively informative. It was especially interesting to compare Overstreet's comments against the reality of the book he produces. Sometimes the two things do not match. For example, in answer to questions as to how he gets the prices for each new edition of the *Guide*, Overstreet reported that he makes exhaustive checks of adzines, and dealer offerings and has convention spotters working thruout the year to spot new tends and changes in the buying habits of collectors. If this was the case, then we might legitimately wonder why the *Price Guide* fails so consistently to record the active purchasing patterns of fans or speculators. The current booming popularity of *X-Men and Iron Man* is a good example. The new *Guide* lists *X-Men* #94 as being worth $9.00 in mint condition, despite the fact that this issue has been selling over the past twelve or so months at $30.00 and up a copy. Many other examples of inappropriate pricing can be spotted with even a casual glance through the *Guide*. How then can we believe that ads, conventions and dealer price lists are religiously checked as is claimed here?

Some interesting facts emerge from the interview. Did you know, for example, that while the first *Price Guide* only sold about 1,800 copies, Overstreet is projecting a first print run on the 10th edition at 45,000 copies? If anyone still has lingering doubts about the commercialization of this hobby, those figures ought to dispel them forever.

There are other avenues of interest explored in the interview. The questions of underground and Canadian comics, and Canadian distribution of the *Guide* all produce answers with various degrees of candor and accuracy. The interviewer seems to have gone into this project with a firm idea of what he wants to know, and manages to keep the interview on rigid lines guided toward established goals. Very little superfluous sidelining appears. All in all, it's an excellent piece of work.

The same thing cannot be said, alas, of the short article by Bob Blakey on EC comics. This is the cover feature, incidentally, and what we get is two pages (almost), set in large type, with wide margins, dealing with the horror comics phenomenon of the early fifties. The article is filled with errors and sweeping generalities and is basically superficial. Some of this is excusable when you realize that the article is reprinted from *The Calgary Herald*, a newspaper, and that Blakey is a reporter with no real knowledge of comics.

Still, a few interesting facts jumped off the page. Did you know, for example, that in 1954 in Vancouver, the Junior Chamber of Commerce held a public book burning ceremony and destroyed some 8,000 horror comics contributed by kids in the area? You might also be interested in knowing that there still exists a law on Canadian books specifically banning the production, sale or purchase of horror and crime comics, and provides up to a two year prison sentence for violators. Frightening, isn't it?

There is also an amateur comic strip, a humorous effort. Unlike the majority of amateur strips this one comes complete with a real artist who seems to have real ability. It also has a script that actually might produce a few chuckles. Some of the humor borders on the sophomoric, but there are enough subtleties and genuinely humorous moments to make it enjoyable. With a little luck this could really blossom.

There are also ads, lots of them. Mostly they are of the institutional type rather than direct buying/selling listings. The ad rates seem very reasonable and the editor is aggressively pushing the benefits of his publications, especially to the Canadian fans. Circulation this first issue is pegged at 2,500 copies.

If *Comic Cellar* has any major faults, it is in the lack of sufficient written material to balance out the ad content. The project seems to be off a good start, and with a little more time this problem should be corrected. This is a fanzine that needs your support, and certainly deserves it.

RATING B

SPACE AND TIME

$2.00 or 4/$6.00, Gordon Linzer, 138 W. 70th St., Apt 4-B, New York, N.Y. 10023, 5½ x 8½", 60 pgs, photo-offset

Space and Time is a fanzine which publishes original science fiction and fantasy stories, one of a small handful of such magazines around these days. In past years you could be pretty sure that any original fiction you saw in a fanzine was going to be really third rate stuff. There were plenty of professional science fiction and fantasy magazines on the newsstands, all crying monthly for new material. If a writer couldn't break into this market, then

his stuff was truly unreadable. With the recent decline of the pro mags, many new writers are turning out saleable quality material, but find they can't break into the very limited professional market.

Enter the semi-pro publications such as *Space and Time*. Here a writer can learn to practice his craft, and be paid a trifling pittance for his efforts as well. Presumably once the aspiring writer hones his style and develops his storytelling techniques, he will fly away to the world of Big Time Prodom, thankful that he had the opportunity to see his early material in print and was exposed to constructive criticism along the way.

The quality of these all-fiction publications varies considerably, depending on the special tastes of each editor, and also on the availability of material from would-be writers. *S&T* is one of the oldest all-fiction fanzines around, up to issue #55 already. Generally the story quality of *S&T* has been strong.

This particular issue offers a grouping of short poems and stories which are primarily in the pure fantasy vein. The thing that struck me as I read the issue was that most of the new writers here seem to be strong on style and characterization, but woefully deficient in imagination.

A closer look at some of the individual stories seems to bear out this impression. "The Cycle Round," lead item in the issue, is produced by Jeffrey Goddin, and is a fantasy revenge tale. Unfortunately the writer spends a lot of space developing poetic passages telling us how the hero got to his present state, building slowly to a climax, yet when it comes time to deliver the goods, there is no climax to be found. The story drops off abruptly and the reader is left with the impression that a couple of pages have been cut and that he hasn't finished the story yet.

The same problem besets Brad Cahoon's "Dead Run." The writing in this one is superb; equal to or better than most of the stuff you will find in any professional magazine or anthology. But there is no *story* here. Cahoon spends time fleshing out his character, a jogger on an early morning run, and develops the plot motivator, in this case another jogger who catches up with the protagonist and runs past him at a more rapid pace than our hero can maintain, even though the other jogger is dressed in a full business suit and tie with low-cut dress shoes. The whole situation develops your interest, and holds it, right up until the very end. Then the story stops cold. No conclusion is reached, although a veiled implication is inserted and left dangling. I felt cheated, as if the writer had sadistically decided not to bother telling me the rest of the adventure.

Similar problems are present in "The Measure of Your Foot" by John Taylor. After developing a thought-provoking premise, he aborts the story short of the punch line. The reader is offered what may be a sort of solution to the hero's problems, but then again, you aren't really sure. The illustration that adorns the story also effectively spoils this ending at first glance.

"Subway Suckers" is a study in irony. Alien beings convince a man riding a subway train that he will die in forty-five minutes, so they can study his reactions. After the hoax is revealed, the aliens and the human passenger are robbed, and all their equipment is stolen by teenage muggers. My feeling after reading this was a big, "So what? Who the hell cares?" Nothing here has made me care strongly one way or the other about either the human victim or the aliens who themselves become victims.

"Dread Assistance" is a confused and illogical short which may be fantasy, or it may simply be the rantings of the insane protagonist: It's difficult to tell. A sword-and-sorcery story by Janet Fox is the longest entry in the issue, and fails to provide the slightest realistic motivation for the actions of her heroine, or explanation for how she is able to break the emotional spell at the end of the adventure. Dull is the kindest word for this one.

"The Telecommander" is a science fiction tale by G.J. Bassett, and is one of the best stories in the issue. Unlike the fantasy writers here, Bassett has real problems with polish and style, and the plot he unfolds is hardly a new one. Yet I still liked it. I liked it because it is a genuine *story*: something with a beginning, a middle and an end that didn't leave me dangling and beset with uncertainties.

"Wourms" by Phillip C. Heath is another enjoyable effort. This story is neither fantasy nor science fiction. It is a neat little horror story, well executed, although slightly predictable. But it was worth the reading and after the diet provided by the remainder of the issue it was a welcome tidbit indeed.

So we wind up with two good stories out of the issue. There were several fantasies that were well executed from a writing viewpoint, yet they fell flat on their faces. What is missing here are plots. Remember those? Plots, ideas, story development, the factors that make a piece of fiction entertaining and worthwhile? Quite simply, emotional impressions, character studies, or incidents drifting free of background do not qualify as *stories*. I would suggest that unless most of these writers spend more time working on imaginative plots and less time polishing their narrative flow, they will never make the jump from amateur to professional status. These stories in too many cases are like a big mouthful of whipped cream: the substance, the cake and strawberries that makes the whipped cream worthwhile, is missing completely.

I was very disappointed with the entire issue. Two readable stories out of eight is not a good shooting average. Neither of these two stories was particularly memorable, yet compared to the surrounding material they were like small gems. This is not a good situation. *Space and Time* has in the past provided a much better flow of fiction than this. I hope they can provide more worthwhile material in future issues as well, but right now all I can do with #55 is give it a . . .

RATING D

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Page One

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___FIRST ISSUES (all, etc.)
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___MANY DEATHS OF DR. GRAVES
___MONSTER HUNTING
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___SCARY TALES ___WAR
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Section 5: MAGAZINES & FANZINES

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___ARCHIE DIGESTS (only some—list specific titles separately.)
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Comics Feature Bonus Interview:

GILBERT SHELTON and HUNT EMERSON

This is Brad Walker in London, England. I've managed to track down GILBERT SHELTON, creator of Wonder Wart-Hog and the Fabulous Freak Brothers, probably the most famous underground cartoonist in the world, after Crumb. Tomorrow the Sheltons are leaving on a six-months tour of Europe, visiting the publishers in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Denmark who handle the Freak Brothers. Later on we'll be joined by HUNT EMERSON, the top British underground artist.

WALKER: In your *Time Out* interview (a "counterculture" London magazine) you said you came to London to escape the publicity attendant on the Freak Bros. movie.

SHELTON: Not the publicity so much as the work involved!

WALKER: Is it a live action or animated movie?

SHELTON: Live action. That's one of the reasons I don't want to handle it and face people who think I have the ability to make them a star.

WALKER: They're going to have a bad time with Fat Freddy's Cat.

SHELTON: I hope they don't kill too many pussycats making that movie.

WALKER: Was live action Universal's idea?

SHELTON: Yeah. It's too expensive to make an animated feature.

WALKER: We saw what Bakshi did with *Fritz the Cat*.

SHELTON: Well, that was okay, really. Being a Crumb fan, I enjoyed it. Someone who didn't know Crumb's work might not like it.

WALKER: A lot of people said they preferred the second one, *The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat*.

SHELTON: I didn't see that one. The only thing I heard was that it was really terrible.

WALKER: Gil, are you worried about what Hollywood might do to your characters?

SHELTON: Not really. Actually I don't own the characters, Rip Off Press does. I sold them all except Fat Freddy's Cat—

WALKER: Who has no other name—

SHELTON: "The cat who has no name," like in T.S. Eliot's "On the Naming of Cats."

WALKER: About the Fat Freddy's Cat books — anyone who collects all your work is going to have duplicates of the Cat strips.

SHELTON: For the most part, about 90%. There's a few pages in the cat books that were never published anywhere else.

WALKER: Do you think they have the same audience as B. Kliban's cat books?

SHELTON: Probably. There's a kind of cat cult in Europe and the US, especially a couple of years ago. There were eight or ten cat books. Kliban's sold every cat lover as well as the "hip" market — I'm sure a lot of those jokes went over the heads of those little old ladies. It's the straight crowd that bought all the pillow cases and stuff like that.

WALKER: I was just reading Bill Griffith's *Griffith Observatory*. He has a page called "Cat Tails."

SHELTON: Yeah, that's the sort of thing.

WALKER: I've read several overviews of the underground scene — they always say something like, "Gilbert Shelton is so successful because he has combined underground material with conventional forms, punchlines, structures, etc."

SHELTON: Well, they seem to be saying that underground material isn't supposed to have punchlines, or gags, or storylines.

WALKER: No, I think they mean they're not typical of underground material. I always thought the Freak Brothers succeeded because of their characters. The characters are funnier than the situation, and the situation grows out of the characters.

SHELTON: Yeah, people see 'em as characters and I don't know why that is. They seem to come alive in people's imaginations. I

guess it's because *Freak Brothers* is such a long work that people read a lot into it about their characters.

WALKER: You said you hated having three characters because you had to draw them over and over?

SHELTON: I said that especially about the animated movie because that makes it three times as hard compared to just one character—

WALKER: Like Wonder Wart-Hog.

SHELTON: Yeah, I'd like to do Wonder Wart-Hog as animation or live action — if I ever get the time—

WALKER: Do you see yourself as one of your characters?

SHELTON: No. Of course, there's a little of me in all my characters, I guess.

WALKER: I was talking to your wife about this — this story you did for *Facts O' Life Funnies*.

SHELTON: "Fat Freddy Gets the Clap."

WALKER: Right. I was amazed at the lack of overlap — you did the clap, Crumb did abortions, Bobby London did crablice—

SHELTON: Laura did most of that — she's good at organization. We just sat around the table, more or less, Sherry (Flenniken) took female contraception, Crumb did abortions, and Laura took it all down.

WALKER: How's the book sold?

SHELTON: *Facts O' Life*? I don't know. They printed 120,000.

WALKER: You hear anything from the PTA?

SHELTON: Nah. But some Family Planning group liked it.

WALKER: You've also done some illustration work — like Fat Freddy's on the cover of "The Food Stamp Gourmet" and that led to "The Miller's Tale"—

SHELTON: That was the same publisher. I think I'd already done "The Miller's Tale" — it was in black and white, and my drawings look like a coloring book, no shading. I don't know if they issued it as a coloring book. That was Belairaphon in San Francisco, they did do a line of coloring books.

WALKER: The main characters look like Fat Freddy and Freewheelin' Franklin.

SHELTON: Yeah, probably all my characters tend to look alike. I probably do three or four basic types. I can't remember if I started to do Fat Freddy for "Gourmet" or if that's just how it came out.

WALKER: Who's Foolbert Sturgeon?

SHELTON: His name is Frank Stack. The reason he took that name, that pseudonym, is that nineteen years ago he did a comic strip called *The Adventures of Jesus*.

WALKER: I'd heard that was your first publication.

SHELTON: I published it, yeah, and his initials — F.S. — he didn't want to be known at the time, so he made a pseudonym with those initials that made it sound like it was me. To this day there's a lot of people that think it *was* me — and that's all right with me!

WALKER: He's just come out with Dorman's Doggie.

SHELTON: Yeah, and he did a couple of others — he did one called *Feelgood Funnies*, and *Amazon Comics* — pretty good. Rip Off Press is just about to publish an anthology of *The Adventures of Jesus*.

WALKER: How does it compare with Binky Brown?

SHELTON: It's funny, and Binky Brown is serious.

WALKER: Have you heard of anyone who's cut up their *Thoroughly Rippeds* to play "It's a Raid"?

SHELTON: No, I can't think of anybody.

WALKER: Have you played it yourself?

SHELTON: Oh, yeah. It's not a game-player's game; it's a comic fan's game — but it works like a game. With "Raid" and my other game, "Feds & Heads," which I did for *Playboy* in '69, I was trying for a new game concept, not just something like Monopoly. But once you deviate from the basic rules you create all sorts of problems for yourself.

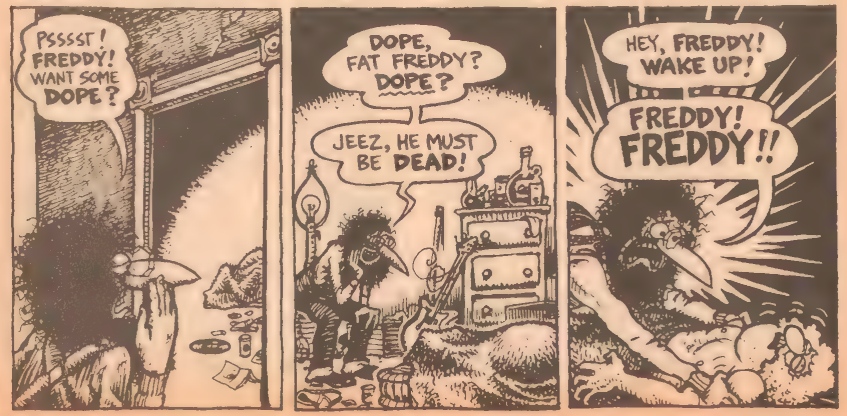
WALKER: There are only certain basic patterns?

SHELTON: And even if a certain game works, it still might be dull to play.

WALKER: The "Dealer McDope" game has just gone on sale for £9 ($18) — did you help develop it?

SHELTON: Nah, that was all done by Dave Sheridan.

WALKER: Has Dave Sheridan helped you with anything other than the Freak Brothers?



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SHELTON: That's about it.

WALKER: Dealer McDope is his own character?

SHELTON: Yup.

WALKER: What's he doing right now?

SHELTON: He's going to be the technical advisor on the Freak Brothers movie.

WALKER: I'm sure he'll keep it in the spirit of the strip. Will they have Notorious Norbert the Narc?

SHELTON: That would probably be a good idea. But Bill (BWL) Norton is the screenwriter, it's up to him.

WALKER: Did you see *Up in Smoke*?

SHELTON: Yeah! I loved it! Hilarious!

WALKER: Have you gotten into any trouble, using a brand name for Philbert's last name?

SHELTON: No, in fact I used to spell it same way as Desenex foot powder, but when *Esquire* magazine reprinted some Wonder Wart-Hog they requested I use an "A" instead of an "E" and I've just done it ever since.

WALKER: I first saw Wonder Wart-Hog in a 7-11, mid-'60s, he says "Gotcha, chief!" to LBJ's "Go kill Poverty, y'hear?"

SHELTON: Yeah, that was done by a company in Torrance, California.

WALKER: The L.A. *Times*' supplement, *West*, did a story on undergrounds, about the time of the *Fritz the Cat* movie. I must confess, their description of Lois Lamebrane's rape turned me off until I finally read the story and saw what a prickteaser she was.

SHELTON: That was back in *Zap! Comics*, back when *Zap!* was so outrageous!

WALKER: What's outrageous these days?

SHELTON: Can't outrage anyone.

WALKER: These things go in cycles — back in the '30s Mae West was as outrageous as you could get, so the next big female star was Shirley Temple.

SHELTON: [Laughs] Yeah, that probably had something to do with the moral/political situation, too. We were really conservative then.

WALKER: I was wondering if you saw anything like that these days, with *Star Wars* heralding a supposed return to innocence.

SHELTON: I see what you mean, yeah. I don't think *Star Wars* is as innocent as you seem to think, as innocent as *Flash Gordon*.

WALKER: Like *Laverne & Shirley* isn't as innocent as *I Love Lucy*.

SHELTON: Lucy ain't all that innocent!

WALKER: Not for the time, I guess — it's hard to believe we were once all hepped up over Lucy being pregnant on TV.

SHELTON: [Laughs] I remember that! God, I'm old.

WALKER: What's your exact position at Rip Off? Founder, publisher —

SHELTON: Yeah, I'm part owner, director, Vice-President, editor-in-chief . . .

WALKER: All that.

SHELTON: There's not all that many people.

WALKER: There were four of you to begin with — You, Fred Todd, who else?

SHELTON: Jack Jackson, a cartoonist, and Dave Moriarty, the printer. He ran the printing press.

WALKER: Did you ever help on the print run?

SHELTON: No; I tried it once or twice, and realized how difficult it was — like riding a bicycle, only a hundred times more complex. So many things to keep in balance.

WALKER: The four of you started printing — what was your first book?

SHELTON: Might have been *God Nose*?

WALKER: Wasn't it *Rip Off Comix & Stories*?

SHELTON: No, that's fairly recent. I'm just finishing the sixth issue now, featuring "The Death of Fat Freddy"!

WALKER: And "Gilbert Shelton's Advanced International Motoring Tips"?

SHELTON: Yes, I'm a pro!

WALKER: Gettin' some use out of Europe. Is this character supposed to be you?

SHELTON: Yes. Eventually I'll do enough pages for a book.

WALKER: How many do you have so far?

SHELTON: Oh, fifteen or twenty —

WALKER: Whoa! That's enough for a book right there!

SHELTON: Nah. I'll wait for forty-eight.

WALKER: Do you do anything besides what goes out for Rip Off and *High Times*? That is, are you anything other than an underground cartoonist?

SHELTON: I'm not committed to *High Times* anymore — that was too much work. Once I had enough pages to finish *Thoroughly Ripped* that was it.

WALKER: So the Freak Brothers aren't appearing anywhere?

SHELTON: Just through Rip Off Press. *Rip Off Comics* are supposed to be bits and pieces of books that will be published later. The "Death of Fat Freddy" will be in *Freak Brothers #7*.

WALKER: You *do* make your living solely from underground comix and related products, then?

SHELTON: Yeah!

WALKER: And you're one of the few who can say that. How many full-time underground cartoonists would you say there are?

SHELTON: Well, there's Crumb — if you call what he's doing underground. He does stuff for the *Co-Evolutionary Quarterly*, which isn't really underground.

WALKER: It's alternative publishing.

SHELTON: S. Clay Wilson, Trina — as far as I know they have no second jobs. People who make a living from undergrounds? Your guess is as good as mine — Ted Richards, well, Ted Richards has a strip in *Skateboarder* magazine. That's not underground — it's kind of offbeat.

WALKER: Didn't Gonick do some work with Ted Richards?

SHELTON: A little bit — they share a studio in San Francisco.

WALKER: I guess that's why Gonick's stuff reminds me of Richard's stuff—their styles are not dissimilar.

SHELTON: Once in a while I see something in Gonick's work that he's obviously picked up from Ted — it's obvious because their styles are *not* similar — I'm sure he does it deliberately. Also Gonick used to do all his work with a brush and lately he's switched to pen and that immediately makes it different from Ted's work.

WALKER: I see a lot of brushes on your desk, here in the strawberry jam jar. You prefer brushes to pen?

SHELTON: I don't draw with a brush, I just use it to fill in the

solids.

WALKER: I see. What kind of pen do you use?

SHELTON: A Speedball B-6 and a Hunts 107.

WALKER: Regular Bristol Board, too.

SHELTON: No, plate finish. Strathmore — this is some inferior surface here that comes off and clogs up the pen.

WALKER: Which do you prefer, self-publication or letting others publish it?

SHELTON: I prefer my own publication.

WALKER: Don't have to worry about deadlines then?

SHELTON: Not so much. You have to work harder when you work for yourself, but there's more days off.

WALKER: I see you have ads for personal appearances and Freak Brothers cigarette papers.

SHELTON: Yeah . . .

WALKER: Have you done any other ads?

SHELTON: I didn't do those pieces.

WALKER: Have you done any advertising work?

SHELTON: No, not really.

WALKER: You've been in London four months now. How do you like it?

SHELTON: Lately I've just been sitting here at the drawing table, drawing Wonder Wart-Hog.

WALKER: The Freak Brothers books sell pretty well here, don't they?

SHELTON: Yeah, but I can't give you the exact figures — it's not as good as the States. The numbers are different. Comix just aren't as big a thing in Great Britain as they are in a lot of other places.

WALKER: Yes, like France or Italy. Do you get any feedback over idiomatic American humor?

SHELTON: I haven't had any complaints. I'd guess they understand it here, they see a lot of American television. They don't have the trouble understanding American like I sometimes have trouble understanding British. A lot of things I don't understand about their humor. F'rinstance *Mad* magazine, just take that as an example of topical humor. Most of it's TV — if you don't watch American TV, you won't be able to understand it. Same thing — you don't watch British TV, you won't be able to understand British humor.

WALKER: The British edition of *Mad* usually takes parodies of US shows already running on BBC stations. In the last issue there's a satire on the long-running Coronation Street by Britisher Harry North. Someone once said Harry North was like Mort Drucker rolled into one. I think he forgot to add Angelo Torres.

SHELTON: [Laughs] Mort Drucker's a very good caricaturist.

WALKER: He doesn't get a lot of action into the poses.

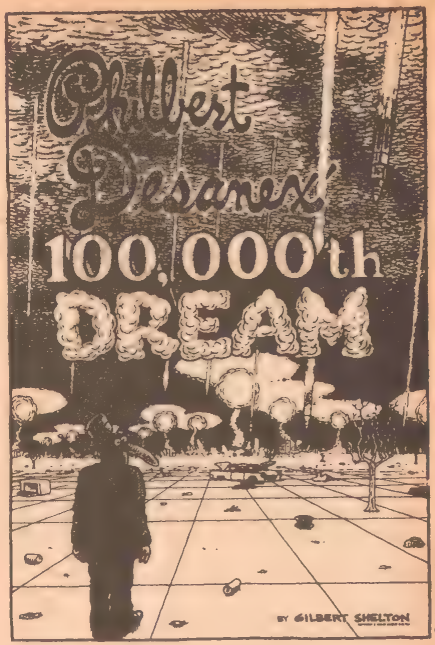
SHELTON: He does caricatures of people that look like the people.

WALKER: You were saying they get American TV here — well, the USA has been getting *Monty Python*, *Benny Hill*, *The Goodies*, *The Two Ronnies*...

SHELTON: There's just not as much of it.

WALKER: Because America can flood Britain, they can understand our humor better than we theirs, eh? Tell me about Terry Gilliam and *Help*.

SHELTON: He was just an editor, sort of an editor.



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WALKER: Any artwork?

SHELTON: Occasionally, not a whole lot. He mostly functioned as an editor.

WALKER: Have you seen him, here in London?

SHELTON: Yes, but he's awful busy these days. But he did take us to the premiere of *Life of Brian*. It was great!

WALKER: *Help* magazine did a lot of fumetti, didn't they?

SHELTON: Yup.

WALKER: Using photos for comic panels — a method known today in the *Star Trek* Fotonovels.

SHELTON: Yeah, *Help* didn't invent it; as the name fumetti indicates, they used it in Italian comics — and Mexican, a lot of Mexican comics.

WALKER: I never saw that — the Mexican comics I saw in California were mostly *Los Supermachos*.

SHELTON: Yeah, *Supermachos* is a good one, but there's a line of cheap, flimsy Mexican love comics that uses fumetti.

WALKER: Kurtzman is credited with starting several underground artists — did you meet Crumb at *Help*?

SHELTON: That's where I first became familiar with his work, but I never met him until I moved to San Francisco.

WALKER: What else about *Help*?

SHELTON: *Help!* had a section called Public Gallery that not only reprinted things out of college magazines but also printed budding cartoonists and sent them five dollars. Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson, a couple of others.

WALKER: I saw Wonder Wart-Hog in a paperback with Power Pie, Fratman and other college comics.

SHELTON: The paperback was a one-shot anthology, edited by Charles Alverson who also was with *Help!*

WALKER: You did some parodies on Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*. I've seen two Tricky Prickears; were there others?

SHELTON: No. I liked doing those parodies. Fearless Fosdick was one of my favorites. I had a hardback collection just of Fearless Fosdick; sure liked it. Al Capp's early *Li'l Abner* was one of my favorites: Li'l Abner, Daisy Mae, the Schmoo . . .

WALKER: The Schmoo is now a Saturday morning TV star. Him, The Thing and Godzilla.

SHELTON: Jesus. You know Frank Frazetta did some work on *Li'l Abner*. He invented Tiny Yokum. Al Capp and his brothers had several strips going at once: that one with Bathless Groggins—

WALKER: *Abbie & Slats*. Also that one with the girl hillbilly—

SHELTON: *Long Sam*, wasn't it?

WALKER: Yeah. For a while the Caplins had a machine going, like Mort Walker, or Johnny Hart—

SHELTON: I love *The Wizard of Id*. It and *B.C.* are two of my favorites. Let me tell you about Johnny Hart. He did *Wizard of Id* first, but the syndicate wouldn't accept it — it was too far out. Then he did *B.C.* and it did so well they took on *Wizard*, but they had this rule about an artist drawing two strips, so he had to hire Brant Parker to draw it!

WALKER: They must have relaxed that rule since. Brant Parker's doing *Crock* now . . . Sometimes I feel that these new strips have only two or three years' worth of good gags before they dry up.

SHELTON: For fifteen years Charles Schulz' *Peanuts* was the best, just fantastic. His new stuff is good, but not as great . . . I have a lot of respect for these guys who do a gag-a-day strip. I know I'd have trouble with that kind of deadline.

WALKER: The Freak Brothers have succeeded because they're such characters: The Last of the Hippies. I always felt that Fat Freddy was more a slob than a hippie.

SHELTON: He's got some elements of a slob, I guess.

WALKER: The impression I get is, Fat Freddy's a slob, Free-wheelin' Franklin is streetwise, and Phineas is bookish and idealistic.

SHELTON: That's about how I like to keep their characters.

WALKER: And of course Fat Freddy's Cat occupies his own world.

SHELTON: Sometimes he's a cat, sometimes a li'l human being in a cat suit.

[At this point HUNT EMERSON knocks on the door. Hunt has come down from Birmingham to do some promotional artwork for the rock band The Beat. For the next few minutes we sip our drinks, look at the artwork in Hunt's folder and the new comix on Gil's desk.)

WALKER: *Revenden El Alamo*, by John Johnson, one of the founders of Rip Off Press.

EMERSON: I haven't seen any comix since I saw you in August (at the Birmingham convention).

WALKER: You don't have any continuing characters, do you Hunt? With the possible exception of Bill the Bunny — what's his other name?

EMERSON: Alan Rabbit. I'll tell you why that is — I get bored with 'em. It took me long enough to get them to look the same from panel to panel. I don't want to think about strip to strip.

WALKER: You sometimes do Victoria Stork.

EMERSON: Yes, well that's the girl I live with.

WALKER: Hermione.

SHELTON: Is that her real name?

EMERSON: No, we call her Hermione but her real name's Virginia.

WALKER: She teaches handicapped kids, doesn't she?

EMERSON: Yeah. She hasn't done much this year because she broke her arm and leg on the Paris ferry. Back in February. It's only just healed up.

SHELTON: The Paris ferry?

EMERSON: Yes, we were coming back from Paris and we got hit by a Liberian oil tanker. A boy was killed and an American student was smashed from the waist downward. She — Hermione — broke an arm and a leg.

[Pause]

WALKER: What do you call your humorous style of drawing? Some people call it Bigfoot.

EMERSON: I call it drawing. I don't know what they call it. I'd call it just zany.

SHELTON: I call it a struggle.

WALKER: Your characters have toothpick arms and oval heads — like rough drafts of the Alien.

EMERSON: [Laughs] Gilbert's style has the toothpick arms.

SHELTON: Well, as to Hunt, his drawing style is funny. His foreground, background, detail, view of the universe — everything has something humorous about it. Nothing's straight — it's like *Krazy Kat*.

EMERSON: Yes, Herriman's a big influence of mine. So is Gilbert; so is Bob Crumb.

WALKER: How about your influences, Gilbert?

SHELTON: I used to like Virgil Partch, Don Martin, the crude

•Barney Blowfly• insect detective•
BARNEY IS INTERROGATING SUSPECTS!
OK! WHAT PART OF THE TREE DID YOU MAKE THE WEAPON FROM?...
BARK!
WHAT WAS THE REAL VALUE OF TH' JEWELS?
CHEEP!
HOW DID YOU LEAVE THE GIRL'S CORPSE?
BA-A-ARE!
THROW 'EM IN THE CELLS -CASE CLOSED!
THIS IS EASY!...

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guys. Course I like Jack Davis but I can't begin to draw like he does — you couldn't call him an influence.

EMERSON: Bill Elder.

SHELTON: Elder! Elder is too straight — his drawing style is, anyway — he always seemed to *write* everything.

EMERSON: When I used to read them, when I was a kid, I used to laugh a lot at Jack Davis and Wally Wood. It's only in recent years that I've gone back to Elder and seen how funny he is.

SHELTON: It's not funny from the drawing style, it's funny from the content.

EMERSON: Yes, maybe it's because the content's there. His drawing is so . . . It plays along with the content.

SHELTON: Listen, the high point of Elder's cartoons was . . . what was the magazine that Kurtzman did between *Trump* and *Help*?

WALKER: *Humbug*?

SHELTON: *Humbug*! He did a Superman parody series with Goodman Beaver. I thought that was Elder's best as far as drawing style. Every brick in every building was sharp; what detail.

EMERSON: I only know his work through the early *Mads*, the ones published through Ballantine Books. Used to read them when I was a kid — me and my brother used to roll around the barbershop floor.

WALKER: Gilbert is one of the few cartoonists who make their living solely from undergrounds and related projects — but there's no one like that in Britain, is there?

EMERSON: Nope.

WALKER: Hunt Emerson is about the only name most Americans can connect with British undergrounds.

EMERSON: That's probably because I've done a lot more work than other people. That's not to say I haven't been around as long, but you need to be willing to do stuff for nothing for a while, just to get it around, just to see it in print. Someone like Chris Wells — he's an excellent artist but he takes longer to do his work and he's not so happy when he doesn't get paid for it, and obviously I've gotten to that stage as well.

WALKER: You've gotten there through sheer quantity of output.

EMERSON: I think so.

WALKER: You've done the Frazzle series.

EMERSON: Yeah, that was in '78; that's what took me over to the States in the first place.

WALKER: Do you think there's much difference between British and American senses of humor?

EMERSON: Yeah. The American find it much easier to do stories; the big trouble with British comix is people don't have enough storymindedness about them, y'know? Someone like Brian Talbridge—do you know his work? New Myths?

WALKER: Oh, Yeah.

EMERSON: *Heavy Metal, Amazing Rock 'n' roll*—his Luther Arkright is a fantastic story but is's going to take about 150 pages to tell in the end. It'll be superb when it's finished, but there's nobody who does, like, three-or four-page stories. Mainly because there'e nowhere to put them.

SHELTON: The main difference is the British like to play with the language. Americans don't do that. They're not good with the language.

EMERSON: What do you mean, play with the language? That's interesting.

SHELTON: Like James Joyce played with the language.

WALKER: Like *The Perishers* or William Rushton; they have a lot of fun with words—Rushton will say something overblown like, "You Flash Harry, you!" or "I knew this would end in unpleasantness."

EMERSON: I see. That's interesting you see such a difference.

WALKER: Two final questions for you both. What would you say is the future of the underground market?

SHELTON: Hard to say. The tendency will be towards alternative publication and sectional distribution. Undergrounds are more like books, not periodicals; they have a longer shelf-life, they sell slowly. It's still the classic confrontation, small versus large.

EMERSON: No future; none. World War III or the coming economic catastrophe will render it all irrelevant.

SHELTON: But then they'll need escapism.

EMERSON: But then there'll be nothing to escape.

WALKER: And what advice do you have to beginning cartoonists?

SHELTON: Make sure you're funny.

EMERSON: Forget it. If you're in England, forget it.

[We finish our drinks and start packing up. Goodbyes are said, and final comments made such as the possibility of Hunt doing some work for *Rip Off Comics & Stories*—and then Emerson and I head for the underground railway station.]

WALKER: What was that you were saying—

EMERSON: You look like a fool, walking along, talking into that recorder.

WALKER: It goes with the territory. You said something about

no markets in England—

EMERSON: Where do I speak—where's the mike?

WALKER: Right there.

EMERSON: Blimey, no wonder this machine's not working very well. Well, that's just a personal opinion, and like all my personal opinions I only thought of it on the spur of the moment. But the world situation—in inverted commas—is, as we all know, getting worse and worse. England's getting a big shock because we've been going through 20 years of boom since the war, like everyone else. But it's been particularly marked in England—the Macmillan years, all the rest of it. And it's now sort of falling apart, y'know. When I was first into comics in the 60s, the early '70s—which way do we turn.

WALKER: That way.

EMERSON: Yeah, but we can go this way as well. Generally speaking, it was a reaction to the social things that were happening then, being involved in the underground and all the rest, and like laughing at it, the "Yippie Syndrome" and all the rest of it. Over the last year it's gotten beyond a joke, it's gotten to be something you don't laugh at anymore. Maybe that's why I haven't been doing comix, 'cause I don't, I can't do comix that are serious; I'm not really interested in it. As a comic I don't think it is a comic, particularly. I mean, that's a bit heavy to say, but never mind. That's it really—but it's my personal opinion. Maybe the '80s—I feel sort of a weight off me shoulders, anyway, having gotten into the '80s. Maybe we're going to see things go differently. But '79 has been a very bad year. Things have just gone down and down.

WALKER: You're one of the best-known British underground cartoonists–in America as well as here—you said this is because you got as much work as possible published, without worrying about getting paid for it—at least at first.

EMERSON: [Laughs] Yes, I don't know why I say these things, cause when they get quoted back at me it all sounds so awful.

It's not really anything I've sort of worked up and planned, y'know. When I first started doing comix nobody was paying me for anything, 'cause it was the underground press. Artists working in London sort of got used to a—down here—

WALKER: Either way, actually — they got to expect what?

EMERSON: They got into a thing where they got work, and they got paid for it 'cause it's a job, y'know? Now I could never make a living doing drawings, not at first, because the stuff that I was doing wasn't commercial at all. I've learned to do *that* over the years. So I never really thought about getting paid. Just think what a gas it was, having anybody write and say, "Can we photocopy something of yours?" I did do a lot of artwork; I have been prolific; it was all there sort of lyin' around waiting to be published. There was never a shortage of it—at first. Come to think of it I haven't had that much published in America.

WALKER: Well, there was George Erling's *Yikes, Animal Bite, No Ducks #2*—

EMERSON: Yes, but that's all been in the past 18 months or so, really.

WALKER: How long does it take you, on the average, to do a page?

EMERSON: It takes about an hour or two to do a panel.

WALKER: Six or seven panels per page?

EMERSON: Uh-huh. Takes a lot longer to write the stuff than it does to draw it.

WALKER: Do you write it all out first or do you just have a vague idea?

EMERSON: Hang on — just a minute — me arm's getting tired from holding this thing — I work in all kinds of ways — but mostly I just start in the top left corner and work my way downwards; sort of just start with one idea and just expand on it.

WALKER: Did you have it all written out for *Thunderdogs*?

EMERSON: No — I've actually written the end now, though I haven't drawn it up; but there's great long stretches where I didn't know what's going to happen next. I had to just leave it be, y' know?

WALKER: And that's due for publication soon?

EMERSON: Well, maybe — we'll see — I have to do four more pages and the inner and outer covers — if I ever get it finished. [Laughs]

WALKER: How did you get involved with The Beat?

EMERSON: I knew a friend of the management.

WALKER: You've been doing some promotional—

EMERSON: I've been doing some graphic work for them, yeah. At the moment I'm looking on it as sort of a sideline to my career, if you like. It's great fun to do, going around with a rock band that's successful, listening, going to gigs, driving around the country — it's exhausting but exciting.

WALKER: Who are your favorite cartoonists these days?

EMERSON: Same ones as ever — Herriman, Gilbert, Crumb, Wood, Elder, Davis . . . That's it — I don't *read* comics anymore.

WALKER: Gilbert was just telling us he likes Mark Twain. Who are your favorite authors?

EMERSON: I don't read fiction. What I read most often now is stuff about the paranormal and things — that's my favorite.

WALKER: ESP, UFOs . . .

EMERSON: Yeah, and there it's not really so much a case of authors as of ideas. But as far as authors go I think Colin Wilson

is brilliant . . . one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century.

WALKER: Do you have any comix coming out soon?

EMERSON: Not really. I've done a couple of pages for *Near Myths*.

WALKER: And a strip for *Fortean Times*.

EMERSON: Uh-huh, but that's all — I mean me time is taken up now. I'm a full-time freelance. I have to earn a living at it. Comix doesn't pay me a living, so these days it comes pretty far down the list of priorities.

WALKER: How about mechanics? What kind of pens and brushes do you use?

EMERSON: The usual sort, you know, just pens and brushes. [Laughs] Well, it's a daft question. I mean people draw, that's all — it makes no difference what you draw with. One uses professional materials, same as any other professional.

WALKER: Gilbert was telling us he has a hard time finding good quality paper here.

EMERSON: Yeah. I use illustration board a lot of the time these days, which is expensive, but it's the best.

WALKER: Gilbert said the stuff he was using, the surface came off on the pen.

EMERSON: We're just now passing a shopful of pseudo-Surrealist paintings—

WALKER: Exactly, and a shoestore window still decorated for Christman—

EMERSON: Yes, a day late?

WALKER: A *day* late?

EMERSON: Yes, it was the Twelfth Night yesterday.

WALKER: Oh. Say, why do they call it Boxing Day?

EMERSON: I *knew* that—it was the day after Christmas when the apprentices got their Christman boxes, which was sort of their Christmas present, from their employers; their Christmas bonus. I read that somewhere. [Traffic] Two genuine London buses.

WALKER: Double decker, in case you can't tell by the sound.

EMERSON: Are we here yet? Nearly there, aren't we.

WALKER: What author would you like to illustrate?

EMERSON: What author? I don't know at the moment. I can't pretend to have an answer to that. That's a good question, but—

WALKER: Gilbert was telling me about illustrating the Miller's Tale from Chaucer.

EMERSON: Oh yeah, that'd be nice wouldn't it? Yeah, he'd do that well.

WALKER: He did it already, for Belairaphon Books.

EMERSON: Fantastic.

WALKER: Here's a daft question—would you like to illustrate any one of Tarot cards?

EMERSON: That's an interesting idea. I have thought about doing a Tarot pack for meself but it would take so long—I would never actually get to use it. I think the Tarot's very important, actually. Where are we? Where is it?

WALKER: That way.

EMERSON: Ah, yes, I see it. Yes, I had some very penetrating Tarot readings from a friend of mine at one time—and it's always meant a lot more to me than, say, the I Ching. I think probably because it's pictures and I'm a picture oriented person.

WALKER: Figures. There's a guy in California who's putting out a fan-artist Tarot—

EMERSON: [Giggles] Oh God, may he be struck dumb.

WALKER: Wendy Pini, Dave Sims, others doing cards. [N.B. For more information on the Fan Tarot Deck, write Bruce Pelz, 1593 Kalisher St., Granada Hills, CA 91344 USA.]

EMERSON: Yeah—well here we are at the station so I'll just sign off here. This is Hunt Emerson standing in the foyer of Notting Hill Gate station. Notting Hill is the centre of what was the Hippie Uprising in England in the '60s and '70s. The area now is full of boozers and crumbling buildings, and lacks a lot of the original feeling. All the people who live here tell me it's still an exciting place to live. I'm just leaving, I'm going from here to Camden Town where the Beat are recording their new single. Hunt Emerson, signing off.

WALKER: Thank you, Hunt, and we'll be watching for *Thunderdogs*. This is Brad Walker, signing off.

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A BLAISE OF GLORY

by Peter Sanderson

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
MAX AQUINO WAS A DECENT, HONEST HUMAN BEING, AND YOU KILLED HIM FOR A FEW PEBBLES—
HE DESERVED TO DIE! THE TREASURE WAS HIDDEN BY MY ANCESTOR! IT IS MINE!
YOU'RE A LITTLE MAD, ALBORIN!—BUT THAT DOESN'T COUNT AS AN EXCUSE IN MY BOOK... I'M GOING TO PUT YOU DOWN
YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE THREATS, WOMAN!
1777

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Most of our readership probably has some familiarity with *Modesty Blaise*, the English comic strip created and written by Peter O'Donnell, from its monthly installments in *The Comic Reader*. However, in reading only eight dailies of the strip per month, most readers may not be fully aware of the thematic elements which make the series much more than the work of superlative storytelling craftsmanship that even the most casual reader must surely recognize it to be. This article surveys the *Blaise* comics adventures, drawn by Jim Holdaway and later by Enrique Badia-Romero, which have received wide circulation in this country in book form, in the *Reader*, and before that, in *The Menomenee Falls Gazette*. In a future article, COMICS FEATURE will deal with the numerous *Blaise* prose novels as well.

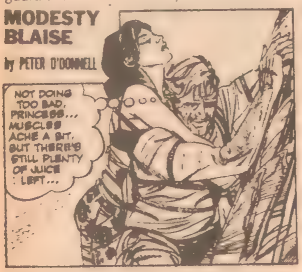
The series centers of course on Modesty Blaise, the one-time starving orphan girl who eventually built and headed the crime organization known as the Network, and then "retired" only to begin going on missions against spies and criminals for the British government, and her friend and former right-hand man at the Network, Willie Garvin. Blaise is the archetypal liberated female adventuress, and surely the direct or indirect inspiration for many like her who followed, both in comics and other media. In her first comics story O'Donnell feels obligated to have her rough up a boorish date and toss him out, and to have her break down in tears after the adventure's conclusion so as to satisfy readers who think women can't really achieve the same command of their emotions that men can. At least in the comic strip, O'Donnell leaves behind such stereotypical Tough Castrating Woman and Weak Woman episodes, and concentrates instead on endowing Modesty with wit, amiability and compassion in addition to her steadfast determination and unshakable courage. Just as importantly, O'Donnell does not beat the reader over the head in establishing Modesty as a heroic woman. The strip takes her intelligence and battle prowess almost for granted, and in the adventures under discussion, only a small child ever expresses surprise at her capabilities. That is as it should be.

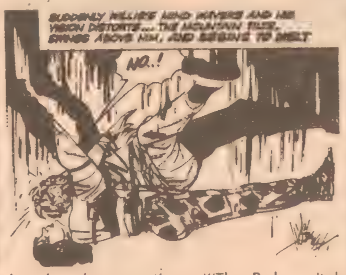
Perhaps related to this matter-of-factness about Blaise herself is the strip's realistic tone. Blaise and Garvin are extraordinarily skilled fighters, but they never come over as being a superwoman and superman. Their victories in combat almost always seem perfectly credible, as do the crimes of their opponents. Even when some mild science fiction is introduced, as with the super-strong exoskeleton in "The Magnified man," or an organization planning eventual world conquest, which we see in "The Warlords of Phoenix," nothing ever is treated so flamboyantly as to strain its believability seriously.

The fact that Blaise and Garvin are former master criminals (albeit ones who steered clear of such areas as the drug trade and concentrated on crimes that harmed no one physically, such as art thefts) serves a practical purpose: they know the ways in which their opponents think and operate. It also helps give their background a sense of the perhaps enviably unusual: they have done what the law forbids, and not only gotten away with it, but become wealthy as a result. The concept of the criminal, or the supposedly socially undesirable person, working on the side of justice, is, however, a quite frequent device in adventure stories and surely reflects a common primal emotional need in the audience. There are, of course, the outlaws and the rebels who fight for the restoration of a just government against the corrupt ruling establishment in power at the time, ranging from Robin Hood to the heroes of *Star Wars*. There are the heroes who are mistaken for criminals by the society they try to help, such as the Green Hornet or Marvel heroes like Spider-Man and the X-Men, or apparent monsters who nevertheless are morally superior to the normal-looking criminals they oppose, like the Thing and the Man-Thing. Getting closer to the heart of the matter, there are comics characters with drives that could easily be labelled evil and even vicious, like the Hulk and Wolverine, who turn their fury against less emotional, more coldly cruel villains who are viewed as more dangerous. Finally, there are comics characters who, in their costumes, sometimes involving horns, or even their names or physical appearance, conjure up images of the devil or death in readers' minds, and yet serve the cause of justice: the Batman, Daredevil, Submariner, Wolverine, the Beast, the Son of Satan, Deadman, the Spectre, Nightcrawler, the Shadow and the Ghost Rider. I suspect that we respond to these characters from an unconscious recognition of our own aggressive and anti-social tendencies, and a desire to believe them not only less worthy of condemnation than whatever people or

forces obstruct the achievement of our goals, but also morally justifiable when turned against those people and forces. So witness Modesty Blaise, who turned to crime only because of the intolerable state of poverty and isolation in which she found herself as a child not through her own fault but through, perhaps, society's, who makes it her practice as a criminal not to harm the innocent, who gives up crime once she has made her fortune and who then not only makes herself into a respected member of society but repeatedly uses her "anti-social" skills in battle and killing, and repeatedly nearly sacrifices her life, in the defense of society.

Blaise's and Garvin's motives for fighting crime are decidedly mixed. Often they are drawn into a case in order to rescue a friend ("Mister Sun," "The Magnified Man") or to avenge the death of a friend ("The Warlords of Phoenix," "Take-Over") or lover ("The Red Gryphon"). "I'm not Batman," Blaise snaps angrily in "Take-Over," "I don't look for trouble." Later in the story she is scolded for not involving herself in the case at hand until a bank guard she knew was fatally shot before her





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eyes; one tends to side with her critic at that moment. Still, the point has been made that she and Garvin are not just like the many heroes of escapist fiction and, as she herself notes, comics, who eternally risk their lives battling crime seemingly for no better reason than because it's there. This lends the pair a degree of believability that some other heroes may well lack.

On the other hand, the very first story, "Modesty Blaise," contradicts this entirely. Blaise remarks at the end of the story that she does in fact need to look for trouble because her adventures fighting criminals give her excitement she felt when she was a criminal herself, and which she and Garvin cannot find amid the boredom of "retirement" amidst respectable society. She is addicted to adventure: "I *need* to buy your wares from time to time, Sir Gerald," she confesses; "I'm hooked and I know it now . . . .My dream of retiring was "retirement" amidst respectable society. She is addicted to adventure: "I *need* to buy your wares from time to time, Sir Gerald," she confesses; "I'm hooked and I know it now . . . .My dream of retiring was just a pipe-dream." Indeed, Blaise and Garvin embark on several adventures ("The Long Lever," "The Gabriel Set-Up," and, much later, "The Galley Slaves") simply because British intelligence head Sir Gerald Tarrant asks them to.

Their need to escape through adventure is interesting in that, after all, it means that they find the same excitement in pulling their "capers," as they call them, as the audience does in reading about them. Again, this is not unique to *Modesty Blaise*: how often, for example, have we seen Spider-Man or Daredevil exult in the joy of swinging around the city in super-heroic costume after a confining day of dealing with everyday miseries? I for one find Blaise's and Garvin's enjoyment in adventuring much more appealing than what George Lucas is trying to do in *The Empire Strikes Back* in having Yoda insist to Luke that a Jedi Knight does not seek or find a thrill in battle. Does Lucas mean that by extension it is wrong for the audience to enjoy watching the conflicts of good and evil in his *Star Wars* films?

Blaise and Garvin even retain a likable touch of the childlike. One notices that Modesty is attracted to men who like to play the clown at times ("The Red Gryphon"). Near the opening of "Take-Over," Willie tries to shake up some bankers' stuffiness by driving up to their establishment in an incongruous-looking van. The two of them are frequently seen engaging in sports such as archery or mock combat. The most startling examples of their playfulness come in "The Galley Slaves." Bored with their snobbish companions on a yacht, they simply bid farewell to their host and swim off to a deserted island in the middle of the ocean for their equilvalent of a camping trip out away from it all. Immediately upon the successful completion of the adventure that follows, we find them racing on the backs of large sea turtles in the surf. "They seem to have forgotten all this," exclaims an onlooker. "Yes," replies Tarrant, calmly watching the turtle race, "that's typical."

Underneath both of their stated motives for their ventures against crime, however, appears to lie a commitment to upholding moral values as strong as any other adventure hero's. Despite the relative realism of the series and the fact that its heroes are themselves reformed criminals, *Modesty Blaise* depicts a world with sharp divisions between good and evil, and in which the evildoers are invariably without any redeeming qualities. There is even a suggestion that Blaise's criminal past is excusable because she operated in an idealized past when there was more humanity even among outlaws than there is today in "The Galley Slaves" her old ally from her days of crime, Lim, who once even saved her life, now has only contempt for her moral code and proves to be as vile as any villain in the series, even threatening to drown a boatload of innocents. That very word, "villain," with its melodramatic connotation, of a man of pure evil, turns up surprisingly often in the series, especially in Willie's own dialogue. In "Take-Over," Modesty observes that perhaps a deceased guard was right when he said that "Everyone ought to go for these villains regardless, soon as they show their ugly faces." Particularly reprehensible wrongdoers even seem to forfeit their rights to be considered human: in "The Hell-Makers" Tarrant refers to the corpse of one of the mental torturers as "this creature."

It should then be no surprise that within the context of this series, the killing of the worst of the "villainous" lot is seen as not only justifiable but as morally imperative. Blaise impassively tells the master heroin dealer Mister Sun that merely capturing him "might only mean prison for you . . . too cheap for a man who's made ten thousand drug addicts . . .No, I'm going to kill you, Mister Sun—*get up*!" Blaise and Garvin, when they kill the villain, usually do so in battle, and hence arguably in self-defense, but in "The Hell-Makers" Blaise makes no move to save the now helpless criminal mastermind from a lethal fall. Her ally in the adventure, the hermit Gus, observes about the torturers Modesty is fighting that "I seen some cruel things in the war . . .maybe done some myself when I had to . . .but when people git to disfigurin' a man's *soul*, they ain't fit to live." Whatever our own feelings about Blaise's revenge ethic, it seems to bother the strip's lawmen not at all. When she reports a man dead in "Mister Sun," one of the authorities comments, "A lasting deterrent, Miss Blaise—I am concerned with results, not legal formalities."

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
SOON AFTER DAWN, A FAINT SOUND WAKES MODESTY
ONLY ME, PRINCESS
I PICKED UP YOUR MESSAGE AT THE AIRPORT AND CAME STRAIGHT 'ERE — GOT A ROOM JUST ALONG THE CORRIDOR
WILLIE LOVE ... OH, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU
1747
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If Blaise's and Garvin's need for escapism partially conceals their passion for justice, one wonders whether their relationshipt with each other might not conceal some other kind of passion. They tell everyone they are just friends and not in love with each other, and believe it themselves. Both of them apparently continually have short-term affairs with other people, and although they seem to dismiss their lovers rather casually in "The Gabriel Set-Up," we see in "The Red Gryphon" that Modesty, at least, can develop strong attachments in her romances (although even in the midst of mourning her deceased lover she states that "it wasn't the greatest romance ever." *But*...Modesty and Willie are constant companions who stick together even as their lovers come and go, and their tremendous affection for one another, and even dependence on each other, is always obvious. So it is that the nature of their relationship comes under question in the strip from time to time. With regard to a new acquaintance's seeming lack of interest in her background, Modesty marvels that "You haven't even asked where Willie Garvin stands with me—and *everyone* asks *that*." ("The Galley Slaves"). Perhaps the pair do not quite believe their "just friends" protestations themselves. At the close of "The Red Gryphon" Modesty tells Willie about a millionaire's interest in her and asks him, "Aren't you going to be jealous?" Garvin replies, "Princess...I'll be jealous when you start patching up bullet 'oles in 'im," as she has been doing to Willie. In "The Puppet Masters" Maude, who is interested in Willie herself, asks Modesty "Aren't *you* his girl?" "Not exactly, Maude," Blaise replies, "I was his boss once, but I don't know what you'd call us now—just sort of a habit with each other, maybe." "Say like breathing?" Maude asks rhetorically. Actions may speak louder than words on this subject: witness Willie's vengeful rage when he thinks Modesty has been murdered in "The Gabriel Set-Up," and Modesty's anguish when she thinks he has probably gotten himself killed in his attempt to avenge her. One of the greatest horrors the strip can imagine is for one of the two heroes to kill the other, as the drug-addled Willie nearly does in "The Hell-Makers" and the brainwashed Modesty almost does in "The Puppet Masters." Indeed, her enemies in the latter story calculate that to get her to murder Garvin would be the worst possible vengeance they could take on her.

Are Blaise and Garvin deceiving themselves about the true nature of their "friendship?" Does O'Donnell believe that a non-sexual relationship between a man and a woman is somehow better than a sexual one, and therefore wants us to take the Blaise-Garvin relationship at face value? Or are various characters in the strip, not to mention myself, just being closed-minded in refusing to believe that such intense feelings between a man and woman have a sexual dimension to them? Whatever the answer, it is important to notice the effect making the bond between the heroes at least seemingly one of simple friendship has on the series. If the bond was clearly acknowledged to be a sexual one, readers might attribute too much of the pair's feelings for one another to physical attraction. By ruling this factor out, at least on the surface, O'Donnell makes the reader look for other reasons why people care for one another, ranging from appreciation of one another's wit and skills to, in Willie's case gratitude for rebuilding his self-respect and giving his life a purpose.

In fact, perhaps the most impressive aspect of *Modesty Blaise* is the way that it serves as a testimony to the depth and strength of the bond two people can establish with one another. We can see this in any of the series' stories in which one tries to rescue the other from peril, but we see it most powerfully in the finale of "The Hell-Makers." Garvin has been dosed with hallucinogenic drugs to such an extent that he may never recover. The only way to cure him, Modesty decides, is to give him a long, arduous task to concentrate upon that he will feel he absolutely must accomplish, and so she fakes a serious injury to herself, and gives herself enough sedatives to knock herself unconscious for hours. In order to get her to a doctor, the drugged Garvin, unaware of the deception, has to carry her down an impossibly steep, impossibly high cliff, a climb that takes four hours and is nearly impossible for someone carrying another person, even is his mind was totally clear. But Willie nevertheless undertakes the climb down, despite the horrible anguish that Holdaway so powerfully renders, and we see as he climbs both Blaise and Garvin simultaneously risking almost certain death in order to save the other.

It is as great an act of courage and devotion as one could imagine, and furthermore demonstrates what can be said about the human spirit within the alleged confines of a "mere" adventure story. After Modesty and Willie have safely reached the bottom, their ally Gus, marveling at their feat, tells their rescues, "You ain't never seen a pair like her an' him in all your goddam *life*, Mister." He is absolutely right, too.

YOU KNOW SOMETHING, WILLIE LOVE? WE WENT ALL THROUGH THAT CAPER AND NEITHER OF US GOT HURT FOR A CHANGE — WE MUST BE GETTING LUCKY
2162
OH, I DUNNO, PRINCESS... MAYBE WE'RE IMPROVING?

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Comics Collecting/Doug Sulipa

The Comicollector

In the first part of my column last issue, I discussed the background of comics fandom and outlined a general breakdown of the different types of comics collectors. The reader/passive collector, the collector for story content, the person who collects for the artwork, the collector who enjoys the artform as a whole, and the person who collects for financial or investment reasons will all be covered in this and the next few installments of this column.

To begin this discussion, let me tell you a short story of a small boy. On a family car trip to a tobogganing outing, at a stop for gas, he went into the station with his father and noticed a bright, colorful rack of comic books. He grabbed a copy of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #246, having eyed on the cover the same Donald Duck he'd seen and loved on television. He had to have this comic, and with a small amount of pleading with his father, it was his.

That comic book became the most important part of the trip. Hell, he almost forgot about the trip! He flipped through that comic perhaps a hundred times, although at four years old, he couldn't actually read it. Once the family reached their destination, the day dragged; he wanted to get home so his father could read the comic to him. Eventually it was read to him and he was enthusiastic. Soon he wanted every Disney comic book. His father, from the first generation of comics readers, was more than happy to help.

But there was a problem: only a few Disney comics were coming out and the boy's comics "appetite" could not be left unfulfilled. He quickly began reading other funny animal comics and was anxiously learning to read. He became a loyal Disney and Harvey Comics fan. After all, to a young boy, wasn't Casper's fantasyland as interesting as, say, Alice in Wonderland; Uncle $crooge's adventures as good as Tom Sawyer's; or Little Dot's aunts and uncles as funny as Dr. Seuss's stories? Comics became more important to him than his toys. Then, in 1966, I discovered *Batman* comics through the *Batman* TV show, a discovery which spurred an unending devotion to the comics medium.

Comics collectors are often discussed, written about, and recently, being catered to to some degree by the major comics publishers. Yet what is a comics collector? The definition has unfortunately not been given that much attention. They have been treated as pretty much one homogeneous entity.

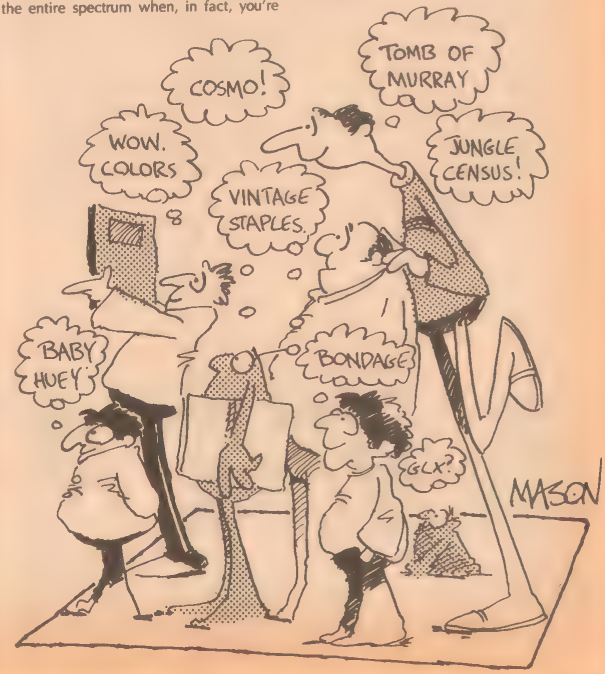
I think it would be pragmatic to clearly define my views of the comics collectors. But how do you discuss a group of people if you have no cut-off points or border lines? Some people define the number of collectors as the total number of people who attend comics conventions. Some would add to this the number who buy *The Comics Reader* or Overstreet's *Price Guide*. Does this mean that only those who have discovered comics fandom are collectors? It would seem silly to believe so, especially considering my story about the young comics collector who lived totally outside fandom itself.

Still others would define a collector as one who has in excess of "x" number of comics. Okay, then when does a person cease being a collector? Does he have to actively buy new comics? If he stops buying comics, although he keeps what he has, does that disqualify him? Again, too much has been written about the collector without a clear definition of who and what s/he is. You may think you're addressing the entire spectrum when, in fact, you're perhaps only addressing one segment.

For the purpose of this column, and to let you know where I stand, my definition of a collector is a person who actively pursues and/or *maintains* the goal of accumulating comics according to a set of standards he has established for himself.

By this definition a person who just starts with one *Godzilla* comic book and has the intention of acquiring the other twenty-three issues of the series as funds become available, is a collector. On the other hand, someone with one thousand miscellaneous comics which were bought at random and tossed in a corner, is an accumulator, and not a collector. A collector can be someone who has bought all 169 *Classics Illustrated* comics, but who since the series was cancelled, has added nothing to that collection, as long as he actively maintains the comics (i.e., takes care of them, rereads them).

A great portion of the general comics reading population can be described as accumulators. Their interest is enough to have them continue buying comics, but not enough to make them more than passive collectors.



While serious collectors very probably account for one third of the total comics buying market, the casual reader remains important to the market, and often helps books which would otherwise not survive, thrive. Newer *Archie* comics, as an example, have (as Bob Overstreet would say) little, if any collector value. Yet the *Archie* titles remain top sellers. They are bought by the younger readers, most of whom eventually "come of age" and stop reading comics.

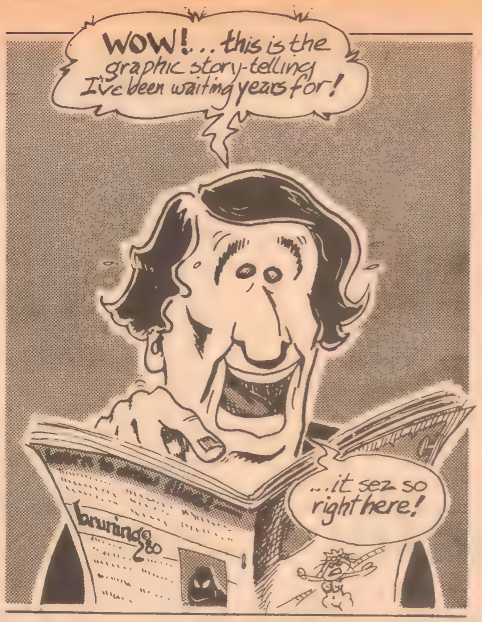
Yet overall comics sales have dwindled tremendously in the past ten years, and further, nowadays kids who are in any way interested in the artform are more likely to become collectors than casual readers. The young, casual readers, however, cannot be overlooked as potential collectors. For example, about three years ago I wondered why, if new Harveys, Gold Keys and Archies sell well on newsstands, I couldn't sell them in my shop. I moved my shop to a new (and more expensive) location, which had all the important passer-by traffic, and gave those titles good display space. The casual readers started coming into my shop and I captured a new clientele (which also justified my better and more expensive location). Once you have these casual readers in the shop, their interest in comics may be furthered. The more casual readers who become collectors means a more permanent audience for comics.

As one reads more comics and becomes more and more interested and involved in the characters, plots, alternative worlds, and so forth, one begins to crave more comics than the companies have the capacity to produce. The long wait between issues deepens this craving. The evolving collector also wants to know more about the characters' past, their origins, the ups and downs and changes in their career and they all mount to an almost irresistible desire for back issues. And so is the hardcore comics collector born.

Continuing my own story of becoming a collector was my purchase of *Batman* #183 (mainly because of the cover). My interest in the Batman was unending: I watched the TV show with loyalty, bought all the Batman paraphernalia, went around the city trying to locate the entire gum card set...and I soon found that four comics titles—*Batman, Detective, Brave and the Bold* and *World's Finest*—weren't enough. Through *World's Finest* I discovered Superman, and it went on from there.

Eventually I discovered Marvels, and jumped right into their entire line, and by 1969 enjoyed them to such an extent that I was willing to lay out $5.00 for a copy of *Spider-Man* #1.

It is a not-too-strange coincidence that many long time collectors/fans follow a similar collecting pattern. They begin collecting the funny animal titles, then get into the fantasy-oriented DC line, followed by the more "realistic" Marvels.



Beyond that they may become an even more hardcore collector. This is a point where the dividing line will often appear. Either he continues collecting only what he enjoys reading, or he goes off into another pattern. He may become a completist or an investor, or may get into collecting fanzines, etc. The majority of comics collectors do not go beyond the Marvel/DC lines, although as those collections get near to complete, the truly hardcore collector begins a search for the next plateau, whether as noted above, specific artists' comics, or Golden Age books, or whatever.

Reprints continue to serve a notable portion of the group which collects for story content. Those who can't afford the high prices of earlier issues of *Fantastic Four*, for example, can buy a much less expensive reprint, and still get to read the stories. Unfortunately, in many of the Marvel reprints, pages were omitted from the original stories; yet, the recent paperback reprints of many early issues are complete, even if the size is a bit small. DC's digest reprints also help satisfy the collector for stories' needs, although the digests do not reprint stories in series or sequence order.

Availability is the most often encountered problem for the beginning collector. Often the titles they collect will be sold out on the newsstand and they may become discouraged. The problems of newsstand distribution is an article unto itself, but it's a sad fact that the majority of printed copies of comics are usually returned. Yet these beginning collectors, in addition to the casual readers, represent potential collectors.

One final point about the person who collects comics for the story and characters: don't lose sight of the fun aspect of reading comics. Don't let yourself drudgingly continue to read something you are bored with. Grab something different once in a while and you'll never become frustrated and disinterested in the medium. I found myself in this rut a few times and was reading books out of sheer habit, and I found that, for example, I could only read so many Marvels at once without burning my mind out. They became repetitious in their reworkings of formula stories. I finally decided to get some of the old fun comics into my reading diet. I began with one of my favorite cartoons, the *Fox and Crow* from DC, followed by the excellent *Four Color* Bugs Bunny comics and early *Looney Tunes*, not to mention good ol' *Sgt. Bilko*. This was a refreshing break from the "heavier" Marvels, and the mix of the different types of comics made the whole experience much more enjoyable.

Try an interesting combination like Starlin's Thanos series followed by the adventures of Herbie the Fat Fury bopping people with his lollipop or a silly Superman story in which Red K turns him into the amazing two mile high super pickle.

How can you lose?

(Next issue: the person who collects for artwork, and more.)

Guilty Fantasies

by Peter B. Gillis

When consciousness eventually returned to me, I knew something was wrong.

First, I was considerably warmer under the quilt than usual. Next, in addition to the bees living in my head that were predictable on a Sunday morning, I felt a stinging pain along the side of my face. I pressed my left hand to my face and felt along it.

What was I doing with a deuling scar?

"Too many chemicals at that party," I moaned inwardly. "Never again." What would be next? I wondered. Screaming bats? Not something I was ready for. Then I tried to move my right arm and couldn't.

I was pinned underneath a woman.

Now I recognized the odor in the air as expensive perfume. She murmured and stirred. We were both naked: I had forgotten my bunny pajamas last night. This was serious.

(At least I didn't put my clown mask on, I thought with relief. It din't go *that* far.)

I tried to recall the party. It had been your usual University of Chicago party: a keg of Leinenkugel's beer, Talking Heads and Eno on the stereo (a few strange guys had put on some reggae, but were beaten up and shoved in the closet, I remember), lots of homely, altered people having a good time. I recalled dimly now this slender dark woman in a dress with a guy I thought was her boyfriend but who later—

oh god

—later turned out to have a glass eye and no tongue and drove her Bentley. And I, dimly, as through a fog perceiving, remember going to an entirely different party with plush carpeting with the Talking Heads *live* and Brian Eno playing with a synthesizer off in an alcove—

oh oh—

She stirred.

"Darling," she said. "That was the most exciting evening I've ever had in my life. I fear I am in love with you forever."

"Oh?"

"When you delivered that *strappado* to Norman—"

"Norman?"

"Norman Mailer."

"And then started telling me all about *comics*—I, well, you have renewed these jaded tastes." She moved her hands. I yelped in surprise.

"I do not form attachments, Peter, but I reward my friends. Remember our conversation last night?"

"No."

"Well, I'll do it. $150 million dollars, Peter, for you to do whatever you want in the field of comic art. It's yours."

"Oh. Thank you." I got up and gathered up the pages of my Nostalgia Press *Flash Gordon* which, in our apparent ecstasy last night, we had torn to itty bitty pieces.

I've got to cut down on the chemicals. Bad for my reality sense.

The editor I'd hired sat across the table from me. He was holding an icebag on his face from where he had hit the table when he fainted. He said he was better now, but didn't look it.

"Now, as I see it, we'll be giving the following people top rate *and* a consultant's salary *and* complete creative freedom: any book in any format that they want.

"*One*. Jack Kirby. For once he's not going to get an epic cancelled out from under him.

"*Two*. Don McGregor. For once he's not going to bitch about space limitations, and we'll give him enough leeway to choose the artists he wants.

"*Three* . Steve Gerber. Get him away from Saturday morning TV forever!

"*Four*. Art Spiegelman. We're going to be reviving *Arcade*. You remember *Arcade*? One of the finest comics magazines ever printed, underground or otherwise. Yeah, get Bill Griffith too, the whole staff, but Spiegelman's the one I want. The best underground cartoonist *ever*, Crumb included.

"*Five*. Craig Russell. This guys going to be a national resource one of these days. We gotta protect him.

"*Six*. Leonard Starr. The syndicates are worse than the comic book companies, and Starr needs to be liberated from the strip form.

"We can get these people. I want them."

My editor was already beginning to brighten up by the time I hit *Three*, and was looking positively enthusiastic by *Six*.

"Of course, there are going to be others that I simply want to hire, at at least double current rates, of course: Starlin, John Buscema (no more layouts!), Colan, Englehart, Claremont, Marshall Rogers, Dick Moores, Justin Green, Tom Sutton, Mike Ploog—and I realize Eisner has all the money he wants, but will you call him and tell him we want to print a *Complete Spirit* hardcover series and see if we can sign him up? And get me Harlan Ellison on the phone. There are a few projects I want to discuss with him."

There was a yelp. I refocused my eyes: my editor has managed to break the pencil he was holding in his hand, and then had attempted to continue writing with it. The pencil had been impaled in the middle of his palm and there was blood everywhere.

I suggested we break for lunch. There was more, but I didn't want to clutter up my editor's schedule right away.

"Now here are some of the properties I think we should acquire, some of the books we should do. Now bear in mind that I'm *not* worried about whether things will sell or not. In fact, most of these things will be coming out as trade paperbacks anyway. The one exception to the rule is going to be an American version of *Pilote*, the French mag: a combination of a regular current affairs magazine, a satire mag, and a comic anthology. Done right! But that's for later. Here's a list:"

I unrolled the gilt-edged scroll.

"*One*. The Lensman books by Doc Smith. The finest space opera ever written, and prime comic book material. Why nobody ever adapted them is totally beyond me. Jack Kirby will be doing this one.

Two. Cartoonists Monthly. In this book I want to get some folks who have never worked in comic book form a chance to do it, together with some historical pieces. People like Kliban, George Booth, Shel Silverstein, Chris Miller. I don't want this as a parody mag, incidentally, but as the real thing. Humor, if need be, but also straight stuff, to wit: Donald Barthelme, Jerzy Kosinski, and others.

"*Three*. Since we should have some superheroes and traditional stuff (leave us forget the core of the comic book phenomenon), I propose acquiring certain superheroes and their trademarks from the other companies. The first and most expensive will be Batman. But," and I blushed, "we can afford it. Others from DC are Adam Strange, Green Lantern and the Phantom Stranger. At Marvel I've found few characters I want to steal, except of course, for Caleb Hammer."

There was a tittering around the ma-

hogany-lined conference room.

"We will be doing the Shadow and Doc Savage, except that Doc Savage will be in the form of a hundred-page comics novel and not cut up."

At this point, a hugely-breasted secretary walked in, interrupting my proposal for the feminist comic, edited by Trina Robbins and whomever else she chose, with enough money to let it sink or swim.

"Mr. Gillis, I have urgent phone calls from John Romita, Jim Aparo, John Byrne, Alfredo Alcala, Steve Skeates, Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez, Mike Golden, and Gil Kane begging for interviews about new strips. And oh yes, a Mr. Chaykin said something about slicing your—uh—head off, I believe if was."

I sat down. Suddenly I was dizzy.

"Peter, darling, so far you've been letting other comic book people do what they want. You're just too modest, as most truly masculine men are. What do *you* want to do?"

I moved my hands. She squealed.

"No, Peter! I mean you should do some comics you yourself want to do."

"By jingo, you're right! I shall do just that! I shall show them who's boss!"

That "By jingo!" should have been a clue that my reality sense was slipping further and further away. It was clear to me later.

I showed up at the next executive meeting wearing my clown mask, another clear sign. I unrolled the parchment manuscript and began.

"*One.* A P.G. Wodehouse comic book. The main strip will be Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, with a Mulliner back-up strip. Naturally it will all intertwine eventually. I will write; Leonard Starr will draw.

"*Two. Amerika Comics.* A contemporary, straight, non-sf action series, a sort of Naked City-cop-*Lou Grant* comic, except that it is set in an America in which the President has declared a state of military emergency and never relaxed it. Congress has been dissolved, and America is a police state. Without preaching, I want to do a truly terrifying cautionary book. I again will write, and I'm getting Alex Toth to draw it

Three. A genuine fantasy book, a la Tolkien. Two strips, both written by me, one illustrated by John Buscema, the other by Craig Russell. And another by Mike Ploog. And one by Wally Wood.

Four. Contemporary Classics Comics. We will be adapting *Another Roadside Attraction* by Tom Robbins and *Even Cowgirls Get The Blues*, by me and Tom Sutton; *Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs, by me and S. Clay Wilson; *Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon by me, Marshall Rogers and John Severin; *The Fat Man* by William Kotzwinkle, by me and Gilbert Shelton; *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter Thompson, by me and Ralph Stead—"

It was then that the bats came screaming out of the ceiling, straight at me.

Interested in contributing to *Comics Feature?*

We'd like *Comics Feature* to be *your* magazine. If you're interested in submitting articles or artwork, please send all writing samples, articles or artwork to our editorial address, with the necessary return postage. All submissions will be given sincere consideration. Please allow four weeks for a reply.

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MARVEL COMICS

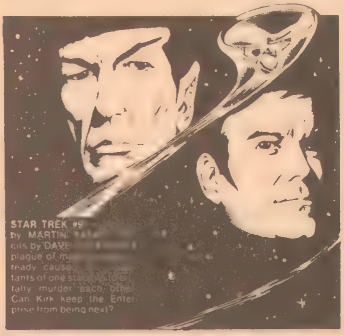
While we will never knowingly print inaccurate information in these pages, Marvel Comics reserves the right to make any changes that may become necessary.

The following comics will bear a **December** cover date and will be on sale in **September** (August shipping schedule).

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #70 — Script by MARK GRUENWALD and RALPH MACCHIO. Pencils by MIKE NASSER. Inks by GENE DAY. There's gonna be yowlin' on Yancy Street when the ever lovin' **Thing** goes into action against **Live Wire** and **Shellshock!**

MOON KNIGHT #2 — Story by DOUG MOENCH. Pencils by BILL SIENKIEWICZ. Many will fall before the scythe of the *Slasher* — unless Moon Knight can put an end to his senseless murder spree! And wait'll you find out who the Slasher really is!

SPIDER-WOMAN #33 — Script by MARK DeMATTEIS. Pencils by STEVE LEIALOHA. The Web Lady follows a tortured, twisted trail through San Francisco's netherworld to a place where the past still exists — and where a sinister scheme is enacted!



MACHINE MAN #18 — Story by TOM DeFALCO. Art by STEVE DITKO. Machine Man takes on his toughest challenge since the Hulk — Canada's super-team, Alpha Flight!

KING CONAN #4 — Script by ROY THOMAS. Art by JOHN BUSCEMA and ERNIE CHAN. Conan and Conn fall victim to the death-dealing "Shadows in the Skull!"

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #211 — Script by DENNY O'NEIL. Art by JOHN ROMITA, JR. and JOE SINNOTT. When surface scientists threaten Atlantis, the **Sub-Mariner** attacks... and that's where Spidey comes in!

CAPTAIN AMERICA #252 — Written by ROGER STERN. Art by JOHN BYRNE and JOE RUBINSTEIN. We don't believe this **either**... but according to Roger Stern (who oughtta know), this issue features the explosion of a natural gas filled super-tanker — with Cap chained to the ship's bow. **Plus:** the villainy of Batroc and Mr. Hyde! **Plus:** A feature on the secret life of Captain America.

THOR #302 — Written by MARK GRUENWALD and RALPH MACCHIO. Art by KEITH POLLARD and CHIC STONE. You probably wondered why the Thunder God has never fought a vampire. Us, too! Now he does. Enter: Synerge!

MICRONAUTS #24 — Story by BILL MANTLO. Art by PAT BRODERICK and ARMANDO GIL. Cover by MICHAEL GOLDEN. The Micros, SHIELD, super-computers, telepaths, the hordes of Hydra, Mentallo, the Fixer... this one's got so much you've gotta buy it just to see how we fit it all in one book! Plus: *Tales of the Microverse!*

GHOST RIDER #51 — Story by MICHAEL FLEISHER. Art by DON PERLIN. A tale of murder, kidnapping, supernatural retribution, rock'n'roll... and the Ghost Rider! Also, a story featuring the wild west's **Night Rider** written by FLEISHER with art by CARMINE INFANTINO and MIKE ESPOSITO.

INCREDIBLE HULK #254 — Written by BILL MANTLO. Art by SAL BUSCEMA. In an attempt to re-create the **Fantastic Four's** famous flight into space, four desperados gain cosmic-ray induced super powers... and turn them against the Hulk!

FUN AND GAMES #16 — The Hulk is still trying to finish all the mazes, puzzles and riddles from issue no. 1. But everybody else is clamoring for more — and here it is. Enjoy!

DOCTOR STRANGE #44 — Written by CHRIS CLAREMONT. Art by GENE COLAN and DAN GREEN. Cover by MICHAEL GOLDEN. The master Mage fights a death-duel with the dreaded Shadow Queen as his incredible adventure in the realm of the Black Mirror comes to its senses-shattering conclusion!

SAVAGE SHE-HULK #11 — Story by DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT. Pencils by MIKE VOSBURG. Cover by MICHAEL GOLDEN. The She-Hulk must save the life of Michael Morbius, the one man who can cure her fatal blood disease! But it won't be easy — Morbius was once a **vampire**... and he's got lots of *enemies!*

AVENGERS #202 — Script by DAVID MICHELINIE. Pencils by GEORGE PEREZ. Inks by DAN GREEN. Cover by PEREZ and TERRY AUSTIN. The conclusion to our adaptation of JIM SHOOTER's classic Avengers novel, "This Evil Undying!" featuring the Avengers' final showdown with Ultron!

CONAN #117 — Pencils by JOHN BUSCEMA. The savage Cimmerian fights as never before to defeat the one foe all his Barbarian strength may well be useless against!

MARVEL TALES #122 — Re-presenting Spider-Man #145, written by CONWAY with pencils by ANDRU and inks by GIACOIA and HUNT. "Gwen Stacy is Alive... And, Well...?" Plus: the return of the Scorpion!

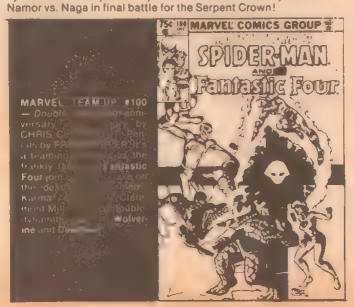
MARVEL'S GREATEST COMICS #95 — Reprinting Fantastic Four #115. Written by LEE and GOODWIN with art by J. BUSCEMA and SINNOTT. The Over-Mind turns Mr. Fantastic against his teammates! And... the secrets of the *original* Eternals!

X-MEN #140 — Written by CHRIS CLAREMONT. Art by JOHN BYRNE and TERRY AUSTIN. He stalks the Northern Wilderness .**Wendigo**! Guest-starring the uniquely Canadian super-team called **Alpha Flight!**

FANTASY MASTERPIECES #13 — A re-presentation of Silver Surfer #13, "The Dawn of the Doomsday Man!" Written by LEE with art by J. BUSCEMA and ADKINS. And, from Warlock #10, "How Strange My Destiny!", written and penciled by STARLIN with inks by LEIALOHA.

ROM #13 — Story by BILL MANTLO. Art by SAL BUSCEMA. Cover by MICHAEL GOLDEN. Stricken with amnesia, the sterling Spaceknight must take on the Plunderer and his murderous pirates! And beginning this issue, a much requested new feature: *Saga of the Space Knights*, featuring tales of ROM and his fellow Wraith-fighters in the years before ROM came to earth!

TALES TO ASTONISH #13 — Re-printing Sub-Mariner #13, written by THOMAS with pencils by M. SEVERIN and inks by SINNOTT. Namor vs. Naga in final battle for the Serpent Crown!



COMING ATTRACTIONS

We re sorry for any inconvenience this may cause - The Bullpen

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA #22 — [illegible] and Jon [illegible] inked by Wa[illegible] MONSON inked by Jo[illegible]ANSON. Cover pe[illegible] and inked by SIMON[illegible]. Apollo re learns th[illegible] level of the Bo[illegible] Kelly goes on a [illegible] rean-quance a[illegible] [illegible] ircu-lesco pane[illegible] the Food[illegible]

POWER MAN AND IRON FIST #66 — Story by MARY JO DUFFY. Pencils by KERRY GAMMILL. Cover by BOB LAYTON. Detectives Colleen Wing and Misty Knight run into mucho trouble — in the form of Sabretooth and the Constrictor! And if you're betting that it's up to Power Man and Iron Fist to save 'em — well, you guessed right!

FANTASTIC FOUR #225 — Written by DOUG MOENCH. Art by BILL SIENKIEWICZ and JOE SINNOTT. The FF and the mighty **Thor** team up to save the life of an alien viking god!

IRON MAN #141 — Written by DAVID MICHELINIE. Art by BOB LAYTON. Down in the Bahamas, the golden Avenger fights a sub-sea death-duel against the magnetic malevolence of Force! Plus the hissable return of Justin Hammer!

PETER PARKER #49 — Story by ROGER STERN. Art by MARIE SEVERIN and BRUCE PATTERSON. Cover by KEITH POLLARD and BOB McLEOD. We hope you enjoy meeting our newest villain, the Smuggler — cause we know that Spidey won't! Plus: the beginning of an all-new **mini-series** starring the **White Tiger!**

DEFENDERS #90 — Script by ED HANNIGAN. Art by DON PERLIN and PABLO MARCOS. The Defenders and **Daredevil** join forces for a no-holds barred showdown with the Mandrill and his legions! And of course, there's still the usual gang of sub-plots!

MARVEL SUPER ACTION #26 — Re-presenting Avengers #65 written by THOMAS with art by COLAN and GRAINGER. "The Swordsman Strikes," and he's after the new Goliath!

AMAZING ADVENTURES #13 — Re-printing all of X-Men #7 written by LEE with art by KIRBY and STONE. The Blob joins Magneto's evil mutants — and villaindom will never be the same again!

STAR WARS #42 — Written by ARCHIE GOODWIN. Art by AL WILLIAMSON and CARLOS GARZON. Part IV of Marvel's adaptation of ***THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.*** Contains material not seen in the treasury, the super-special, or the paperback.

MASTER OF KUNG FU #95 — Story by DOUG MOENCH. Art by MIKE ZECK and GENE DAY. A taut tale of international intrigue which pits Shang Chi and co. against crazed cultists, the man called Samisdat, the KGB, and an army of Synergons! Not for the weak of heart!

MARVEL PREMIERE #57 — Written by WAGNER and MILLS. Art by DAVE GIBBONS. You've heard all the rumors about Marvel England's version of the adventures of the imperturbable, time-travelling BBC-TV sensation — now see it for yourself! Loudly we present... **Dr. Who!**

SGT. FURY #161 — Reprinting Sgt. Fury #54, written by G. FRIEDRICH with art by AYERS and J. SEVERIN. The moving tragedy of... "The Peacemonger!"

WHAT IF #24 — Story by TONY ISABELLA. Art by GIL KANE and FRANK GIACOIA. Cover by JOHN ROMITA, JR. and BOB McLEOD. The alternate reality you demanded to see: *"What if Gwen Stacy Had Never Died!"*

MARVEL ANNUALS

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANN. #14 — Written by DENNY O'NEIL. Pencils by FRANK MILLER. Spider-Man and **Doctor Strange** team up to combat a mad mystical scheme — hatched by a henchman of **Doctor Doom's**—that neither spider-powers nor magical might alone can hope to stop! Special guest appearances by Doom himself and the (real-life) rock group, **Shrapnel!**

CONAN ANN. #6 — Script by ROY THOMAS. Art by JOHN BUSCEMA and ERNIE CHAN. Begins the adaptation of L. Sprague deCamp's novel, "Conan of the Isles!" Conan — at age seventy — in epic adventures on land and at sea! Ya just can't keep the old galoot down!

MARVEL MAGAZINES
(Cover dated November)

CRAZY #68 — Cover by BOB LARKIN. Another smorgasbord of side-splitting comedy by PAUL KUPPERBERG, BOB McLEOD, NOEL BAEBLER, FRANK SPRINGER, TOM HACHTMAN, JOEY EPSTEIN, GARY HALGREN, DAVID ALLIKAS, WALTER BROGAN, STEVE SKEATES, PAT BRODERICK, ARMANDO GIL, VIRGIL DIAMOND, ALAN KUPPERBERG, MURAD GUMEN, KENT GAMBLE, ED HANNIGAN, KOVACS, MICHAEL SULLIVAN, and MARY WILSHIRE. Try to say *that* five times fast! Phew!

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #58 — Script by ROY THOMAS. Art by JOHN BUSCEMA and TONY DeZUNIGA. The fateful final chapter of Marvel's adaptation of Andrew J. Offutt's novel, "Conan and the Sword of Skelos!"

HOWARD THE DUCK #8 — Cover by JOHN POUND. Once again magnanimous Marvel gives you not just one but two terrific duck-tales (ouch!). First, in a story written by BILL MANTLO with art by GENE COLAN and DAVE SIMONS, Howard and Bev face the octogenarian menace of... "The Grey Panther!" Then, MANTLO and guest-artist MARSHALL ROGERS team up to give you "Duck Man," a hilarious spoof of Rogers' classic interpretation of a Distinguished Competitor's caped crusader. It'll drive ya beze, man!

Bugging the

--WHILE YOU STOLE YOUR POWER, USURPING IT FROM THE SUBJUGATED RACES OF THE MICROVERSE! WELL, EARTH ISN'T GOING TO BOW DOWN TO YOU OR ANY OTHER TYRANT!
I'M CALLING A HALT TO YOUR INSANE DREAMS OF CONQUEST! IN THE WORDS OF A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY OF OURS, THE BUCK STOPS HERE!
THE ENIGMA FORCE HAS MADE A GRAVE TACTICAL ERROR IN CHOOSING YOU TO COMBAT ME, CAPTAIN! FOR NOW I SEE THE FORM AND SUBSTANCE OF ITS POWER --AND I FEAR IT NO LONGER!

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Create a universe!

Build an environment both fascinating and hostile!

Show us characters who will draw us into this new world and make us care about them.

Let there be those who are evil beyond measure, and those who are the personification of good!

And above all, make it both *believable* and *fun*!

Who could give such a command? and to whom?

The Guardians of Oa?

The Watcher?

Eternity?

Oracle?

Nope! Mego!

Mego? The toy company?

Damn right!

The story is rapidly becoming a legend in its own right. Bill Mantlo noticed something different about some of his son's Chirstmas presents. They were a group of figurines with interchangable parts. Sitting under the tree, playing with the toys, Mantlo became intrigued by them, and started building a little fantasy world around them, something every kid has done at one point or another. Shortly thereafter, Mantlo went to Jim Shooter with the idea of a series based on the miniature figures. Shooter contacted Mego Toys and made licensing arrangements for a book. Bob Hall was called in to help visualize the characters and settings, but ended up leaving due to other commitments. Mike Golden, fresh from DC's ranks, took over the artistic reins.

The first indication that something *different* was going on was on the Marvel letters pages. Normally, small ads appear at the bottoms of the pages, usually consisting of a cover stat, some flashy copy, and an on-sale date. Lo and behold, little phrases like "The Micronauts are Coming!" accompanied by illos done especially for them started popping up. (Baron Karza standing before a brick wall where "The Micronauts are Coming" was graffitied, muttering "Not if I can help it" or Rann and Mari in the classical "hero and damsel facing off-panel menace" pose with "T.M.a.C." stencilled in perspective let-

Micronauts

by Brian Boerner

tering on a gridded floor.) No on-sale date. No hyperbolic copy. Just a cryptic reference by characters we'd never seen!

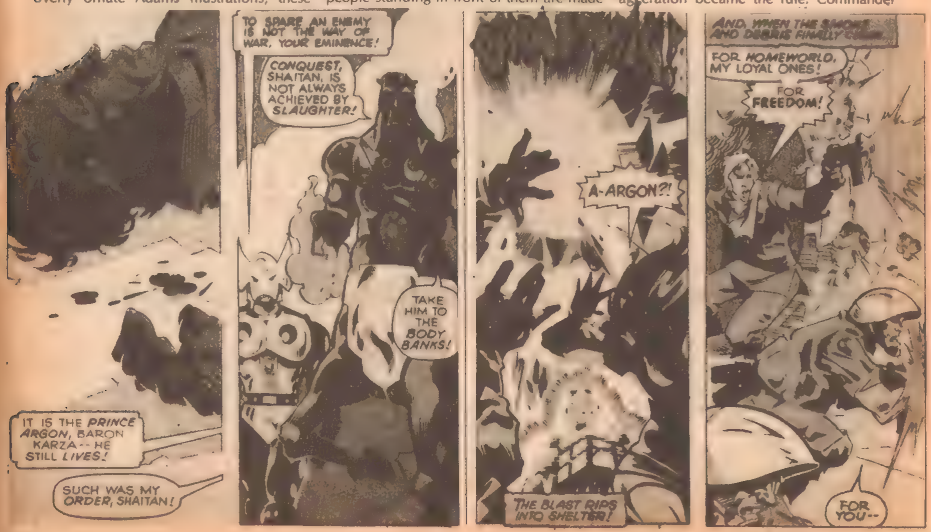
The ads whetted the appetites of the fans. Something was about to happen, but it wasn't being done in the traditional manner! Instead of blasting away with the usual 24-gun salute, Marvel seemed to be barely hinting of what was to come. Fan circles were abuzz with speculation on what was in preparation.

The first issue had a "symbolic" cover of the Micronauts blasting and charging at the reader while Baron Karza loomed in a menacing pose over them. A nicely done cover by Dave Cockrum and Al Milgrom. Nicely done, but not the "different" style we had been led to expects.

Inside, that 'different' style had arrived, with a vengeance! Unlike the standard exaggerated Kirby-Buscema figures or the overly ornate Adams illustrations, these people had the feel and look of realism. Golden and Joe Rubinstein opted to forego intricate feathering, crosshatching techniques and instead, utilize solid areas of black and white to lend a solidity to the art. Speed lines were nonexistent, and ray-blasts and explosions seemed almost to be solid objects themselves, with power and force behind them, propelling them forward.

From page 1, the reader is thrust into non-stop action as we join a revolution already in progress. Close-ups of fleeing refugees alternate with medium and long shots of gracefully floating Acroyears and pursuing Dog Soldiers firing as they come. Costumes and equipment are intricately detailed even in crowd scenes, adding a touch of authenticity. The planet Homeworld itself seems to be made out of light. The buildings themselves radiate light as people standing in front of them are made into silhouettes! Explosions and ray-blasts are done as bursts of light that obscure or silhouette their targets as they hit. Blaster emissions have a solid "feel" to them, almost as if they were some sort of liquid, rather than ethereal light. There is an *impact* when those bursts connect. And for once, an artist realizes that *everything* in a panel with a strong light source is going to be visually affected by it. (How many times have you seen, let's say, the Human Torch in a panel with other people, and despite the fact that his body is a mass of flame, the panel's main light source seems to come from elsewhere? Not from the guy standing there made out of fire? C'mon!)

The linework creating the illusion of solidity was a departure from the comic norm. Solid areas predominated and holding lines were sometimes disregarded altogether. Understatement rather than exaggeration became the rule. Commander


IT IS THE PRINCE ARGON, BARON KARZA -- HE STILL LIVES!
SUCH WAS MY ORDER, SHAITAN!
TO SPARE AN ENEMY IS NOT THE WAY OF WAR, YOUR EMINENCE!
CONQUEST, SHAITAN, IS NOT ALWAYS ACHIEVED BY SLAUGHTER!
TAKE HIM TO THE BODY BANKS!
A-ARGON?!
THE BLAST RIPS INTO SHELTER!
AND, WHEN THE SMOKE AND DEBRIS FINALLY CLEARS...
FOR HOMEWORLD, MY LOYAL ONES!
FOR FREEDOM!
FOR YOU--

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

Rann just wouldn't be able to match the typical Marvel hero in terms of sheer muscle power. (In fact, when a superhero did show up, he was drawn in an almost Starlinesque exaggerated fashion, making him look almost unreal in comparison to the Micronauts!)

In terms of storytelling, the book flows smoothly. Panoramic shots of Homeworld which would normally be given full-page treatment are dealt with in a one-third or half-page panel! The reader is pushed along at a rapid clip, with nothing being allowed to interfere with the flow of the narrative. Just enough information is presented to let you familiarize yourself with the story situations at about the same level of comprehension as Commander Rann. Just as the reader begins to understand the basics of what's going on, the story literally leaps from Homeworld into the void of the Microverse. Once again, shots that could have been full-page panels of the Endeavor and the pursuing Thorium Orbiters in battle are regulated to one-third of a page without losing any effectiveness either as dynamic illustrations or as integral parts of the narrative.

The second issue continues with the Micronauts' escape to Earth. Backgrounds are no longer splotches of light. Vegetation and buildings dominate the landscape with heavily rendered lines establishing their form and substance. When a dog surprises the Micronauts, the contrast between the much thicker linework denoting his fur and hair and the finely-detailed forms of the tiny Micronauts is marked.

The interludes on Homeworld provide an interesting contrast to the Earth scenes. Once more we're presented with the ethereal architecture that just barely can be defined by the eye. Once inside, darkness prevails with the only illumination being the tell-tales and readout screens of machinery.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, a Galactic Cruiser engages the Micronauts in battle in young Steve Coffin's backyard. The explosions and laser effects have altered. No longer are they solid light but like matter without internal luminescence. Once again a contrast is presented as finely detailed Microverse ships dart in and around solidly rendered Earth objects like a lawnmower or kiddie swing set. The illustration angles switch maddeningly from ground-level views of the earthbound Acroyear and Bug to dizzying aerial shots from Rann's perspective to medium level views of Steve Coffin that seem strangely incorrect in terms of perspective, thereby making them all the more effective in presenting the inherent oddity of the dogfight going on around a (to us) small boy.

Throughout the story, Steve is drawn from an ant's point of view to emphasize his size relative to the Micronauts. The only time he appears in a standard medium shot is the last panel of the issue looking over the destruction caused by the battle in his backyard. After practically squeezing the Micronauts out of the panels he appeared in, seeing him amidst the wreckage of the battle, a small despairing

DOG SOLDIERS SURROUND THE LOWER-LEVEL RETREAT KNOWN AS SHELTER. AND...
KWOOOM!
ELEVATE THE CRUISER'S MAIN GUN FIVE DEGREES!
LET THE ARTILLERY SOFTEN 'EM -- THEN MOVE IN!

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By Alex Raymond

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THOUGH YOUR INITIAL ATTACKS GAVE US PAUSE, WE HAVE NOW HARNESSED OUR POWER.
BY THE GREAT PIT! NEVER BEFORE HAS MY PERSONAL FORCE-FIELD BEEN BREACHED!!

BUT THE GARRISON COMMANDER HAS NOT RECKONED ON THE POWER OF THE SHADOW PRIESTS!
PRINCE ARGON, DO YOU HEAR? THE PRIESTS HAVE BEGUN A CHANT!

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lad with only a tiny word balloon to keep him company in the oversized panel, provides an ironic counterpoint.

The third issue continues the "Land of the Giants" motiff as the Micronauts' running battle carries over to a local skateboarding rink. Once again, the camera angles alternate at an almost maniacal rate between dizzying aerial views and almost static worm's-eye shots. Particularly effective are panels showing Micronauts and Acroyears flitting about trying to zap each other while somehow avoiding acrobatic skateboarders.

Homeworld takes center stage in the fourth issue as Karza attempts to wipe out the Rebel Underground. The contrast between the brilliantly self-illuminated Homeworld, where panel backgrounds consist of pastel colors and minimal line-work, and the multi-textured and somber-colored settings of Earth portray the plot's two underlying moods of despair on Homeworld and optimism on Earth.

Also note that the rendering is slowly loosening up and such techniques as feathering and cross-hatching to denote shade and form are slowly superceding the earlier use of solid blacks. Perhaps it was just lack of time or a "relaxing" of the earlier, crisper style into an easier-to-handle format.

The invasion of H.E.L.L. highlights issue five, and provides Golden and Rubinstein an opportunity to do a "Jack Kirby-machinery" number in their own fashion. H.E.L.L. is a combination of Kirby's solidly-built machinery, rather fragile-looking plexiglass tubing and freestanding readout screens. Unfortunately, the art cannot maintain the same level of rendering throughout, and some scenes lose their feeling of depth due to sketchy background work.

Shades of issue one! People fleeing for their lives from the bad guys! Apparently believing that a good splash panel is worth repeating, Golden and Rubinstein start off issue six with a reworked version of issue one's splash. The rest of the book is unevenly illustrated, ranging from passable rendering of the Micronauts' escape from H.E.L.L. to spectacular visuals of Ray Coffin's journey thru the Microverse (including some of the best color-line surprinting since Steranko's Shield days). The art overall is slowly losing its "textured" feel. The scenes between Micronauts and "giant" humans no longer have the heavy-lined humans and finely-rendered wee folk, thereby losing the contrasting "look" to the differently-scaled protagonists.

The icky-goopy Man-Thing oozes into the seventh issue as inker Joe Rubinstein goes all out on his swan-song to present his finest piece of work. The art returns to the study of contrasting textures that made the first few issues so good. Tiny Homeworld ships swirl around Prof. Prometheus's immense form! The (to be blunt) disgustingly slimy Man-Thing battled the gleaming metallic Micronauts. And at last we see Homeworld as it was before it became a technological nightmare.

The "Marvel Comics" look finally catches up with the book as of issue eight. Bob McLeod takes over the inking with a Joe Sinnotish slick style. Mike Golden's design sense remains, but his use of light and dark areas is submerged under feathering and cross-hatching. There is no longer any contrast between the line weights used for average sized humans and those for Micronauts. The illusion of differing scales of perspective is lost.

When Captain Universe is presented, it's almost lost on the reader that he's deliberately drawn in excessively basic Ditkoesque style (as a panel with Captain Universe and Ray Coffin superimposed over each other demonstrated). The use of color-line surprinting is almost useless here as the art it denotes isn't appreciably different from the main body of art. Ah, well. Things could only get better . . . . .

Issue nine proves even reviewers have their off-days. Al Milgrom's inking goes even further than McLeod's in terms of overuse of linework instead of solid blacks. Acroyears who should look as if encased in gleaming metal have an almost hairy look as they're feathered to death by Milgrom's loose style. Golden's design sense carries the magazine with a dramatic flair as the shots of both the Acroyear and Homeworld battle fleets swooping over Spartak and the battle scenes on the planet's surface demonstrate. Unfortunately Milgrom's linework reduces what should be a fleet of ships diving over Spartak to a fleet of ships diving over a mass of feathering! A full scale rebellion on Homewrold, while designed as well as the takeover in issue one, loses much of its impact because Milgrom doesn't utilize the lighting techniques, instead opting for the standard ray-blasts and explosions that are best associated with characters like Iron Man. (Another example is Doctor Strange. In his own book, his

STEVE! WHAT IS IT, BOY? YOU'VE BEEN SHAKING LIKE A LEAF EVER SINCE THAT SPACED-OUT SUPER-HERO CAME ON THE SCENE!
I--I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT AT FIRST, COLONEL, BUT HIS VOICE... IT'S GOTTA BE HIM!
HIM WHO, SON?
SOMEBODY I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE AGAIN, SIR--NOT SINCE HE FELL INTO THE PROMETHEUS PIT! DON'T YOU SEE?

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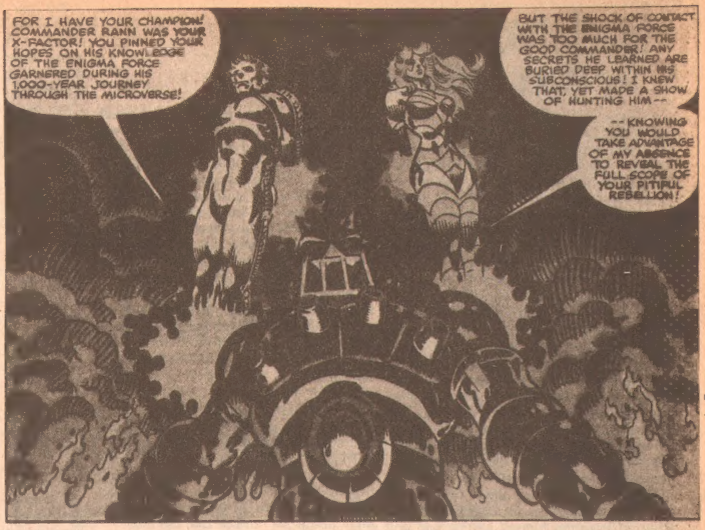
FOR I HAVE YOUR CHAMPION! COMMANDER RANN WAS YOUR X-FACTOR! YOU PINNED YOUR HOPES ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE GARNERED DURING HIS 1000-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH THE MICROVERSE!
BUT THE SHOCK OF CONTACT WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE GOOD COMMANDER! ANY SECRETS HE LEARNED ARE BURIED DEEP WITHIN HIS SUBCONSCIOUS! I KNEW THAT, YET MADE A SHOW OF HUNTING HIM--
--KNOWING YOU WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MY ABSENCE TO REVEAL THE FULL SCOPE OF YOUR PITIFUL REBELLION!
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spells possess a life and dimensionality of their own. In books like the Defenders, those arcane spells are rendered as simple force-blasts. A comedown indeed.) The manifestations of energy no longer have the dimensional effects or luminescence they once had. Even attempts to portray awesome expenditures of energy fall flat in comparison to the illustrations of the first few issues.

The unmasking of the Acroyears was something I hoped would match the still-unpresented viewing of Doctor Doom's visage. (In other words, an impossibility!) The mystery behind the armored warriors was destroyed permanently, when a few subtle suggestions of shadowed features would have increased the aura of awe about them.

The final two issues have a feeling of restrained enthusiasm. The pencilling leaps at the reader, but the inking seems to smother it, keeping exciting moments from reaching their full potential.

CAPTAIN UNIVERSE IS MY DAD!
I SENSE THE PRESENCE OF MY SON, STEVE! I'D BETTER FINISH KARZA BEFORE THE BOY GETS HURT!
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In issue 11, as the Shadow Priests reveal themselves to be different manifestations of Time Traveler-Arcturus Rann, Karza attacks him (them? it?) to keep him from utilizing his powers. The self-luminescent Time Traveler has become a gold-plated version of Rann. Instead of a confrontation of two beings of solid light and solid darkness, a battle of the very basics of existence, we have two overly muscled clowns going toe-to-toe. Instead of basic shapes and shadows being used (As they were in the first few issues. See any of the earlier battle scenes.) these two battle amidst enough free energy to blind anyone watching, and are rendered with such detail it's as if all that energy doesn't even exist! Time Traveler himself appears somewhat hairy and much too solid and detailed for a figure who appears within a nimbus of light!

In a sense, it's disappointing. You become involved in a series you didn't think could be good, (A series based on *toys*? Anyone out there remember Captain Action?) become engrossed in it, and hope that it'll turn into a milestone. Over a period, it starts changing, and you begin to lose the sense of awe with which you approached each issue, and in the end, you're pleased, yet unfulfilled. That's how *The Micronauts* has affected me.

Since issue 12, Howie Chaykin and Pat Broderick have pencilled the book. It's a nice series, consistently good, yet it doesn't have the epic flavor of the first dozen issues. Hell, few books have that epic flavor. A saga of men and of those who are more than men. It's something we should see more often.

Even if the heroes are only three inches tall.

Just as this issue was going to press, Rick Bryant, a noted illustrator in his own right, contacted us with the information that much of the interior background inks and effects (zip-a-tone, etc.) was his own handiwork. According to Bryant, Joe Rubinstein (the credited inker) laid his brush only on the main characters.

Subcontracting of artwork in this manner is not unusual. A classic example is the "Bob Kane" Batman which for many years was illustrated by other artists but credited to Kane. More recently, notable artists such as Klaus Janson, Ralph Reese, Alan Weiss and others have done work in this manner. (Anybody remember the Crusty Bunkers?)

The question that arises from this situation is: "How much work must an artist do to receive a credit?" Obviously, minor touch-up work wouldn't qualify, but when it gets to the point where an assistant is responsible for more than a certain percentage of the work, shouldn't he receive a byline? Isn't his contribution as important as the person who's listed?

In an upcoming issue, we'll be going in-depth into the world of art subcontracting. Rick Bryant will present his point of view and we'll be contacting other artists to offer their perspectives. Of immediate concern, our next issue will feature an article entitled: "Who Draws Batman?" dealing with the many talented artists who signed their work "Bob Kane."

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End Notes
by Peter Sanderson

The title of Gahan Wilson's strip for the *National Lampoon*, *Nuts*, naturally recalls the name of Charles Schulz' own, far more widely known strip about children. Wilson's series' hero, "The Kid," however, does not share Charlie Brown's quiet desperation. The Kid's desperation is about as noisy as you can get. As seen in the recent collection of the strips (*Nuts*, Richard Marek Publishers, 1979; $4.95), his is a world full of terrors which in his mind reach grotesque, overwhelming proportions. Take his guilt-ridden walk home after stealing a candy bar: in a sequence reminiscent of Winsor McCay's work, the bar grows and grows from panel to panel as The Kid grows steadily more agitated, until it bursts through a window into the sunshine outdoors, and the presence of a cynical, unforgiving off-panel God, while crushing its thief under its enormous size. Sometimes the fears are played simply for laughs, to show how silly we were as children to become so upset over some minor tribulations, as in a strip in which The Kid imagines himself turning into an appallingly wizened, corpse-like old man as he suffers through an interminable class. Yet we still see feelings we share even as adults reflected in him, and even in this episode, hints of dreads whose power over us continues without much diminution. The Kid's ever-widening eyes as he watches his dying, bedridden uncle in a coughing fit, strike to the heart of one's fear of sickness and death, a motif that reappears in disturbing ways throughout the book. In the sequence of strips concerning his uncle's death, The Kid also confronts something more subtly unnerving: an inability to feel emotions. He finds he cares more about his dog than about his uncle, and feels guilty over the fact. *Peanuts* is a strip in which adults are never seen but in which they are virtually irrelevant to the lives of the children, who have virtual adult sensibilities anyway. The adults are not seen in *Nuts* either, except for the dying Uncle Jack and later, his eerily waxlike corpse, but they are always there, just off-panel, as towering, intimidating oppressors.

There are outright horrors in The Kid's world, but it is also a world of absurd frustrations, as when he buys a pet chameleon, knowing that it will die that night just as his last one did, but hoping it won't, and then finds it dead the next morning, in confirmation of his own prophecy. Wilson notes in his introduction how brave children must be to face up to the fears and confusion that fill their days.

But the book also features strips in which The Kid successfully accomplishes a task and feels contentment and even pride, meets a friendly adult, and even falls in love. Through understatement and avoidance of sugariness, Wilson makes these moments quietly appealing. *Nuts* is first and foremost a funny book, then a disturbing one, and finally a strangely endearing one.

Recently reissued in paperback is *A Political Bestiary*, illustrated by political cartoonist Jeff MacNelly, who also does the comic strip *Shoe*, with text by, surprisingly enough, former senator and presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy and columnist and *60 Minutes* commentator James J. Kilpatrick (Avon, $4.95). The book's technique is to take a common political term, such as "the staggering deficit" or "the credible deterrent" and then to picture and describe it as some absurd-looking beast whose habits satirize the foibles of government. Sometimes the cartoon is superior to the commentary, which can degenerate into overly long treatments of a single joke, and other times the cartoon fails to fulfill the potential of the text. In other cases, there is a perfect match, but in any event, the book is an interesting novelty item. Among my favorite cartoons in the book are the Reform, a hawklike bird in a 19th-century New England woman's black dress and bonnet, carrying both a Bible and an axe, the Dilemma, an antelope with weirdly uncoordinated, staring eyes, and the Impasse, a combination yak and moose with an intimidating, impassive gaze.

A problem with *Oliphant!* (Andrews and McMeel, Inc., $6.95) is that unlike this political cartoonist's previous hardcover collections, there is no explanatory text for any of the cartoons. Hence as our memories of the last few years grow fuzzier, increasingly more of the cartoons in this volume will cease to make much sense. Take the one that presumes the reader's knowledge of last year's incident in which President Carter was allegedly attacked by a wild rabbit; probably much of the readership has already forgotten this piece of trivia. Also, as one goes through the book, one begins to wonder what and who Oliphant thinks highly of. He's always on the attack, and even a tribute to Einstein on the occasion of his demise comes off as a joke. Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to experience the wit of these cartoons, and the collection makes one realize that even editorial cartoonists can deal with continuing characterizations, even though each day's panel is disconnected from the others. Major politicians, everyman figures, and personifications of nations can become sharply comic characters in Oliphant's hands: witness his naive, incompetent Carter, his longsuffering typical American family, reduced to nakedness and living in a cave by the country's economy, and his embodiment of America as a drunken, pompous W.C. Fields lurching through its difficulties.

NMI

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